

ISABELLA
D'ESTE

BY JULIA CARTWRIGHT



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ISABELLA D'ESTE

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*Isabella d'Este,
From the Picture by Titian in the Imperial Museum Vienna.*

ISABELLA D'ESTE MARCHIONESS OF MANTUA

1474-1539

A STUDY OF THE RENAISSANCE
BY JULIA CARTWRIGHT (MRS. ADY)

AUTHOR OF "BEATRICE D'ESTE," "THE PAINTERS OF
FLORENCE," "MADAME," "BALDASSARRE CASTIGLIONE,"
ETC.

"La prima donna del mondo."

NICCOLO DA CORREGGIO.

*"D'opere illustri e di bei studi amica,
Ch'io non so ben se più leggiadra e bella,
Mi debba dire, o più saggia e pudica
Liberale e magnanima Isabella."*

ARIOSTO.

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ISABELLA D'ESTE

CHAPTER XXI

1502—1512

Cristoforo Romano's letters—Caradosso's cup and inkstand—Cristoforo in Rome—The Cupid of Praxiteles acquired for Isabella's studio—Cristoforo at Naples—Isabella's medal shown to the Queens—Cristoforo's love for Urbino—His death at Loreto—Sabbà da Castiglione, Knight of S. John—Sabbà in Rhodes—His passion for antiques and letters to Isabella—Travels in the Isles of Greece—Antique marbles and medals sent to Mantua—He returns to Italy and writes his memoirs.

CHIEF among the artists in Isabella's service who were constantly helping her to acquire new treasures for her studio was the sculptor Cristoforo Romano. The incurable malady from which he suffered hindered his own work and obliged him to seek frequent change of air, but wherever he went he never forgot the interests of his mistress, and his letters from Milan, Bologna, and Rome abound in allusions to the antique marbles and richly worked cups, gems, and medals which he advised her to buy. In February 1502 we find him at Venice enjoying the company of his friends Michele Vianello and Lorenzo da Pavia. On his return to Mantua he fell dangerously ill, and in August Isabella's friend, Margherita Cantelma, invited the Marchesa to send him to Ferrara to consult a clever physician, Messer Sebastiano d'Aquila, who had cured

her husband, Messer Sigismondo, and who promised to restore him to health in a few days, offering to receive him in her own house and nurse him herself. After another bad attack in 1505 he went to stay at Milan with Leonardo's friend, Marco della Torre, and wrote several lively letters to the Marchesa describing the change which he found at this once brilliant court, and saying that the only house where you still meet cultured men and women is that of Madonna Margherita di San Severino, the sister of Emilia Pia. But the air has already done him good, and he is busy ordering marbles and preparing designs for the tomb of Suor Osanna. In July he wrote to tell the Marchesa of a wonderful bowl in the shape of a wine-cooler, which that rare artist Caradosso had made of forty-nine pieces of crystal mounted on a richly chased stand of silver-gilt and enamel, and which she must have, because it will exactly match one that is already in the Grotta. But she must on no account let Caradosso know this till the bargain is concluded, or the cunning old man will clap on another 50 ducats. As it is, he asks a high price, and has already refused an offer of 300 ducats from Bishop Louis Gonzaga. When Cristoforo offered 400 in the Marchesa's name the goldsmith still hesitated, but offered to bring it to Mantua himself, in order that Her Excellency might see for herself that it was not a matter in which an extra 50 ducats or so was to be grudged. "But Caradosso," the sculptor adds, "has also finished the most perfectly beautiful ink-stand of this age or of any other. He asks 1000 ducats, and if you had to give 10,000 I should advise you not to let it go, because it is a thing absolutely unique."¹

¹ A. Bertolotti, *Artisti*, &c. ; A. Venturi, *Arch. St. d. Arte*, i. 116.

Ten days later Cristoforo wrote again to tell the Marchesa that the Pope had invited him to Rome, but that he hoped to finish his design before leaving Milan, and wished to know exactly how much she was prepared to spend on the monument. "As little as possible!" he imagines, and proceeds to suggest a sum of 150 ducats. For this he proposes to raise a modest tomb with the saint's sleeping effigy under a black marble canopy, crowned with bronze *putti* and candelabra, and supported by four columns of white Carrara marble, polished so as to look like silver. This graceful design, which is reproduced in the *Acta Sanctorum* of the Bollandists, met with general approval at Milan, and was taken to the Marchesa in September by Caradosso when he set out on his journey with the precious cup and inkstand. Meanwhile, late one evening, news reached Cristoforo that his friend, Margherita Cantelma, was lying dangerously ill at Mortara, some miles from Milan, and that her doctor, Aquila, refused to go to her that night. "I could have wished myself elsewhere!" he wrote to the Marchesa, "but, Madonna Margherita's life being as dear to me as it is to you, I hastened to find Aquila, and forced him by my importunity to accompany me to Mortara at midnight. There was no moon, so we had only lanterns to guide us, and were nearly drowned in the Ticino, and when at length we reached Mortara we found the poor lady in a dying state. But with great rapidity he mixed a potion, which had the most marvellous effect and brought her back from death to life, and we stayed with her four days, until she was out of danger. Now we hear that she is improving every day. She was only skin and bones, poor lady! but she asked continually after

Your Signory, and when she was at the worst, kept begging me to find some pretty present to send you."

The Marchesa herself was ill of fever at the time, but wrote on the 27th of September to thank Cristoforo for his services, and tell him that she had seen Caradosso and greatly admired the cup, but found it too large for her studio, and was hoping soon to see the inkstand, which was not yet quite finished.¹ "If you go to Rome," she adds, "we hope you will present yourself to His Holiness, and all others, as our servant and sculptor, which you are, and will, I hope, always remain, knowing that this does us great honour. And we are truly glad to hear that change of air continues to do you good."

It was now Cristoforo's turn to express his concern at the Marchesa's illness; and in a long letter from Bologna he sent her greetings from Casio, who was about to accompany him to Rome, and told her of all the masses and prayers which he had ordered to be offered up on her behalf. Isabella replied in a long letter, written early in November, shortly before the birth of her second son Ercole, full of directions and messages to her friends in Rome.

"We are very glad to hear that you are on your way to Rome, where we would rather see you than in any other place, and we hope that you will serve us as well there as you did at Milan, and will especially endeavour to find us some rare antiques from the recent excavations, with which we may adorn

¹ Sig. Venturi states that Caradosso's inkstand, which Isabella eventually purchased for her studio, is now in the Dreyfus collection in Paris (*op. cit.*).

our studio. First of all you might see the sons of Zampeluna, who has lately died, and has, we hear, left many fine things which may suit us. And if you have need of any help in obtaining these antiques, you might present yourself as our servant to the Cardinal di S. Prassede (Antonio Pallavicino), who, out of love to us, will give you the help of his authority. You can also confer with Brognolo, who is at present in Rome. Let us know when you have made any bargain, and we will send the money. I knew you would be grieved to hear of our illness, because of the love you bear us, and if you offered prayers and vows to God for our health, they came from a faithful and understanding soul, and were well-pleasing to us. We are now recovering, by God's grace, and are regaining strength every day. Go in peace, with our best wishes for your health."

Soon after Cristoforo reached Rome, the Mantuan agent, Lodovico Brognolo, informed Isabella that, although he is aware her heart is set on antiques, he is sending her a cameo, which Messer Zoan Cristoforo has praised for its rare beauty, and for which, by his advice, he has paid 20 ducats. Then we hear of other treasures, bronzes and medals and marbles, which have been dug up during the recent excavations, and eventually find their way to Mantua. "As I know Your Highness is anxious to secure antiques to adorn your Grotta," writes Fra Serafino, a clown who was in high favour both at Mantua and Urbino, "I send you a marble figure, which was lately dug up here. Your Excellency is so learned in these things that you will, I am sure, recognise its beauty and understand its meaning at once, without sending for Zoan Cristoforo. And

6 THE CUPID OF PRAXITELES

I beg you to place it in your Grotta for my sake.”¹ Then Stazio Gadio, her son’s tutor, tells her of a head of Ariadne and a fine marble satyr, which have been lately brought to light. Unfortunately Isabella was compelled to decline these offers, sorely against her will, having no money to spare, since she had spent too much in building a new house; although she owned that, were she to see these antiquities, it was quite possible they would please her so much that she would have to keep them.² But in the course of that autumn she did succeed in adding one antique of rare beauty to her collection—a Cupid sleeping on a lion’s skin, which was ascribed to Praxiteles. The precious marble belonged to Alessandro Bonatti, and after a prolonged correspondence was ultimately acquired by her agent, Brognolo, with the help of Cardinal di S. Prassede, Duke Guidobaldo, and his nephew, Francesco Maria. It was sent to Mantua in December, and placed in the Grotta, where De Thou saw it when he visited the Castello in 1573, and pronounced it to be still more beautiful than the famous Cupid of Michel Angelo. A tradition indeed was current at Mantua in those days that Michel Angelo himself, conscious of the superiority of the Greek marble, begged the Marchesa always to show his Cupid to visitors before they were allowed to see the genuine antique. Cristoforo Romano, who took a keen interest in the Roman excavations, and was present with Michel Angelo when the Laocoon was discovered in the bed of the Tiber, praised this Cupid as one of the finest things which he had seen, in a very interesting letter which he wrote to Isabella on the 1st of December.

¹ Luzio e Renier, *Mantova e Urbino*, p. 168.

² D’Arco, *Arte e Artefici*, ii. 77.

“Illustrious Lady mine,—This morning I presented your letter with much pleasure to the Cardinal di S. Prassede, delivering it with my own hands, and he spoke very warmly of you, and made me all manner of offers in your name, for which I thanked him sincerely. Only he is so old that he will hardly be able to do much more for us. Thank God I am keeping well, and live happy under the shadow of Your Excellency’s protection, which follows me all over the world. Yesterday I kissed the feet of His Holiness and saluted him in your name, which pleased him greatly. He sends you his best thanks, and will attend to your wishes, of which I informed him; but, as he was engaged with these Cardinals, I could not say anything more to him. Since then I have been spending my time in revisiting the remains of ancient Rome. So many ‘fine things’ have been discovered since I was here last that I am dumbfounded at the sight. Here many people take interest in these matters, so that it has become very difficult to get the best things, unless you are the first to see them and ready to pay well, as they soon fetch large prices. I must go and see a bronze relief worked in silver, which I hear is very fine, and which, it seems to me, Your Highness might like. I will strike the bargain if I can, because it would be an ornament worthy of any place. And I will keep my eyes open, and have already told the excavators to let me know, before any one else, if they find a really good antique, and I will lose no opportunity of serving you. But, if Your Excellency comes to Rome this carnival, I am sure many fine presents will be given you, and here your coming is awaited with the utmost eagerness. I

have already told several Cardinals that you are coming to Rome without fail, and I know they will give you so warm a welcome, and you will be so happy, and this place and everything here will please you so well, that you will grieve to leave it, and will often wish to return, and this for many reasons. Because, in the first place, you will find sweet and pleasant company, most of all that of Madonna Felice, the Pope's daughter, a most charming lady, of rare intellect and goodness, very fond of antiques, of letters, and of all good works, and a devoted slave of Your Highness, as she has often told me. I rejoice to hear of your fine boy. Thank God your illness has ended so happily! Be of good cheer, dear lady, and may God give you much joy in your children. I repeat that the Cupid which Brognolo has secured for you is a most rare and excellent thing, and I swear, by the God I adore, that if it had been bought for any one but Your Highness it should never have left Rome. In old days, when I was a boy, I used all my power and skill to prevent such things going to the Cardinal of Aragon and Lorenzo dei Medici, because it grieved me then, as it still grieves me to-day, to see Rome stripped of all its treasures. And there are few such marbles left here now. But for Your Excellency's sake I would do anything, and care for nothing else in the world as long as I am able to please you.—Your servant, ZOAN CRISTOFORO ROMANO.”¹

Cristoforo's description of the rage for antiques which prevailed at the time in Rome, and of the difficulty of securing any really good work at a reasonable price, is confirmed by another of Isabella's

¹ A. Venturi, *op. cit.*

correspondents, a Greek scholar, Giorgi di Negroponto, whom she had also commissioned to send her some beautiful thing for the Grotta. "Although, in truth," he writes to the Marchesa on the 19th of May 1507, "nothing is left of ancient Rome but her immortal name, with some ruins and fragments of statues, whenever I see something of rare excellence I wish for the magician's wand to waft it to my dear lady. If it costs me my life, I will manage to send some beautiful antique, but indeed, *Madama mia*, this is a work of great difficulty. For, if such a thing is found, there are in a moment so many buyers in the market that it needs a miracle to secure it. I hear of men buying finely worked medals, covered with rust, for 8 or 10 ducats, and selling them for 25 or 30, and sometimes they lose, and at other times they make money. Not four days ago a man bought a medal of Nero for 6 ducats, and after cleaning it could have sold it for 12 ducats, but would not take less than 25. Last Saturday a Roman, who was digging in his garden in the Campo di Fiori, found a Hercules clad in the lion's skin, holding a club in the right hand, and in the left a boy of four years old. Phædrus (the learned Cardinal Inghirami, whose portrait was painted by Raphael) says that the statue is not a Hercules at all, but represents the Emperor Commodus. It was taken to the Vatican the day after it had been dug up, and I hear that His Holiness has given the lucky finder a benefice worth 130 ducats a year."

This statue of Hercules and Telephus, or Commodus with the attributes of Hercules, as it is sometimes called, is still one of the ornaments of the Belvedere Museum, where it was placed by Pope Julius. Three

months later, this same Giorgio offered Isabella an antique pavement of porphyry, serpentine, and other coloured marbles, but we do not hear if she was able to pay for it, gladly as she would have obtained it for her Grotta.¹

Unfortunately Isabella's wish to visit Rome was once more disappointed. Several years passed away, and her friend, the sculptor, had long been in his grave, when she at length saw the wonders of the Eternal City. On the very day that she received Mantegna's Faustina, she wrote joyfully to tell Cristoforo, who fully appreciated the value of her latest acquisition. "We think you have heard," she wrote on the 5th of August 1506, "how we secured M. Vianello's agate vase and painting of Pharaoh, and now we have also obtained possession of the Faustina of M. Andrea Mantegna. So, little by little, we are forming a studio of our own. Be still on the look-out for any antiques, bronzes, medals, or other excellent things, and let us know their prices quickly, but in any case buy the medals, and we will not fail to send the money."²

This paragraph forms the postscript to a long letter which the Marchesa devotes to one of those practical jokes which these great ladies were fond of playing on their courtiers. In this case, the person in question was Bernardo Accolti, the brilliant *improvisatore* known as l'Unico Aretino, whose popularity was so great in Rome that the shops were shut and the streets deserted when he began to recite. This eccentric poet professed the most extravagant adoration for the Duchess of Urbino,

¹ Luzzio in *Arch. St. Lomb.*, 1886, p. 94.

² A. Venturi, *Arch. St. d. Arte*, i. 151.

while his excessive vanity exposed him to frequent attacks from the wits and jesters at her court.¹ On this occasion Isabella had desired Cristoforo Romano to give the poet one of her portrait medals when he saw him at Fossombrone, on his way to Rome, but the Duchess, by way of teasing her adorer, begged the sculptor only to show him the Marchesa's medal and tell him that he could not spare a replica. As Elisabetta expected, the Aretine's jealousy was greatly excited when he found how many of these medals had been distributed in Rome and Urbino among Isabella's friends, and he filled both courts with bitter complaints. At length the Duchess began to think it was time to put an end to his delusion, and Isabella sent Cristoforo a letter feigning the utmost displeasure at his forgetfulness in neglecting to give the Aretine her medal. In a postscript she privately begged him to let the poet see this fictitious document, in order to save Elisabetta's reputation, and prevent the spoilt favourite from discovering the trick which had caused every one else so much amusement. This was only one of many similar pieces of fooling in which both these wise and middle-aged princesses took delight, and which the extravagant adulation of the Aretine's language and sentiments provoked. The cruelty of the traitress of Urbino and the fascinating wiles of the siren of Mantua—"la ficatella della Marchesana e la giotoncella de la Duchessa di Urbino," as he presumed to style these illustrious ladies—were the perpetual themes of the letters and verses which he addressed to his patrons, and which they accepted and answered in the same singular strain.

¹ Dennistoun, *op. cit.*, vol. ii. p. 63.

Another replica of the Marchesa's medal which Cristoforo Romano took with him to Naples in the autumn of 1507, was given by her orders to her husband's faithful secretary, Jacopo d'Atri, who had long been absent from Mantua, on a diplomatic mission to Ferdinand the Catholic, and who welcomed this gift with heartfelt joy.

"Zoan Cristoforo," he wrote to Isabella on the 24th of October, "your devoted servant, is here, and has given me a medal of Your Excellency, which is infinitely beautiful, as you are yourself. He tells me that he has shown it as a divine thing to all these Queens, who looked at it with the greatest admiration. The Queen Consort saw it before she went to Spain, and seemed as if she could never be tired of looking at it, saying that, besides rare beauty of feature, it showed signs of great intelligence, which agreed with the reputation you possessed when she lived in France and made her exceedingly anxious to meet you." This was Germaine de Foix, the second wife of Ferdinand the Catholic, who had been brought up at the French court. The other illustrious ladies then present at Naples were Isabella's aunt, Beatrice, the widowed Queen of Hungary; her cousin, Isabella, Duchess of Milan; and the daughters of Gonsalvo de Cordova, Viceroy of Naples. "All the others who saw your portrait praised it in the highest terms, especially the gallant and gracious daughters of the Great Captain, who, after looking at it again and again a thousand times over, kissed the beautiful medal, saying that they too had often heard of your talents and virtues. I asked Zoan Cristoforo which of all these great ladies would like to have a similar medal best, and he replied that all of them had

praised it in the same glowing terms, but that those who had the best judgment gave it the highest praise. Above all, the fair and gallant daughters of the Great Captain seemed to wish exceedingly to possess such an effigy of Your Highness. Since Zoan Cristoforo has been here, he has also made a medal of the Duchess of Milan, which is very beautiful, and has a very skilfully wrought veil, but only the face and head are finished as yet. Besides this, he has made another of the Pope, which is very like him, but which people care for less, as he is old and ugly. But the reverse—two figures offering a sacrifice—is admirable, and may be compared, in the judgment of the best critics, to a fine antique. I feel sure that it will please Your Highness, whose servant he always remains. To-day he goes to Rome with the Cardinal of Aragon.”¹

After spending the next two years in Rome and Urbino, where he was always a welcome guest, Cristoforo went to the Santa Casa of Loreto, where Pope Julius employed him to rebuild the Campanile of this famous Basilica, and to continue the works which Bramante had begun. He still wrote lively letters to his friend Bembo at the Court of Urbino, “the temple of virtue and chastity,” where his happiest days had been spent, and sent affectionate greetings to the Duchess and Emilia Pia. And both Isabella and her brother, Cardinal d’Este, exerted themselves to obtain a rich benefice which he coveted. But his health failed rapidly, and he died in May 1512, leaving to the notary who made his will his copy of Bembo’s *Asolani* as his most precious possession. Casio wrote a Latin epitaph for his tomb at Loreto, and Isabella

¹ Venturi, *op. cit.*

lamented him as a true friend and loyal servant, as well as one of the most brilliant and accomplished artists of her court.

There was another cultivated gentleman, the Knight of S. John, Fra Sabbà da Castiglione, a kinsman of Baldassarre, and an intimate friend of Cristoforo Romano, who corresponded frequently with Isabella on those subjects which interested her so deeply. Born in 1484 at Milan, Fra Sabbà had known Cristoforo and Lorenzo da Pavia at the Sforzas' court, and remembered Niccolò da Correggio as the finest gentleman of his day. On his way to join the Knights of his Order in the island of Rhodes, in May 1505, he paid a visit to Mantua and promised the charming Marchesa to send her some of the choice antiques that were daily being brought to light in the isles of Greece. During the three years which he spent on this barren island, far from his "sweet friends and dearly loved Italy," he devoted himself loyally to this task in spite of many difficulties. There were, as he told her, in Rhodes, especially in the garden of the Grand Master, many excellent sculptures lying despised and uncared for, exposed to wind and rain, which made him feel as if the bones of his father were unburied. But when he expressed his feelings in a sonnet, which he hung round the neck of a statue, the Knights of other nationalities, "of whom," he remarks, "the less said the better," declared that he was an idolater, like all Italians, and he found it wise to hold his peace. Under these circumstances Fra Sabbà advised the Marchesa to ask Monseigneur de Chaumont, the French Viceroy of Milan, who was a nephew of the Grand Master, to beg his uncle to

send him some Greek statues and other antiquities. She might further suggest that, as His Reverence was no doubt occupied with affairs of greater importance, he should desire the Italian Fra Sabbà da Castiglione to undertake this commission. Only, the Marchesa must on no account allow it to appear that the suggestion proceeds from Sabbà himself. "For in this case," wrote the young Knight, "I shall be handed over as a pagan and heretic to the Inquisition, who will promptly reduce me to smoke and ashes! Such, alas! is the folly and malevolence of ignorant men!"¹

In his lonely exile the poor young scholar thought sadly of the happy days that he had spent at Milan and Mantua, and begged to be affectionately remembered to Messer Marchetto, the famous singer, and Messer Fedele, the goldsmith. His own literary pursuits, he tells Isabella, are all in abeyance. His collection of epitaphs, which was to be dedicated to the Marchesa, remains unfinished, and he can make but little progress with a new work on Chivalry, in which he is attempting to draw the portrait of a good and perfect knight according to his own ideas. But at least he can discuss the subject with the Castilian Knights of his Order, who know, or think they know, a great deal on the subject. But Mars, with his horrid trumpet, is ever calling him to arms, and the hand which once held the pen must now handle sword and lance. For an attack from the Turk is daily expected, and the gallant Knights are making ready and await his coming with devotion and courage.

Meanwhile his one solace, he tells his dear lady,

¹ *Lettere inedite di Fra Sabbà da Castiglione*; Luzio, *Arch. St. Lomb.*, 1886, p. 99.

is that he has founded a new Academy, on a strange Parnassus if you will—with no magnificent halls or golden portico, and no well-cultivated gardens gay with flowers, but on the barren sea-shore, where the waves dash against the rocks and the winds howl with ceaseless fury. Here he recites tragedies, comedies, eclogues, and satires to the music of the wild waves, and if a hoarse raven should chance to alight on the rocks and lend an attentive ear to his recitation, he counts himself most fortunate and marks the day with a white stone. “So life goes with a man doomed to spend his days among barbarians! But perhaps,” he adds, “Fortune, the strong goddess, is keeping me for better times.” There are gleams of sunshine too in his dreary life, as when, in the month of May, he goes for a summer sail to the Cyclades and sees the birthplace of so many divine heroes. He visits Delos, the home of Apollo and Diana, but could weep to see the broken columns and infinite number of marble statues, carved by the finest chisels, lying on the ground, and longs in vain to bear away these priceless fragments to adorn his lady’s Grotto. All he can send her are his medals, which he wraps up in a sonnet written amid the ruins of the temple, so that at least she may be able to say that her collection boasts some antiques from the home of Apollo.¹

At length, after eighteen weary months, the long-desired letter from Monseigneur de Chaumont arrived, and was duly presented to the Grand Master. The Marchesa had acted with her habitual dexterity, and ere long His Most Reverend Signory gave Fra Sabbà gracious permission to search for ancient marbles and

¹ Luzio, *op. cit.*, pp. 100–105.

send them by ship to Venice. The poor Knight was in the seventh heaven! Now at length he may roam at will through the island, seeking out new treasures with the eyes of Argus, without fear of being branded as a heretic or idolater. But there are still two perilous shoals to be avoided. One is the danger of the treasures falling into the hands of a certain Knight of the Order at Venice, who may detain them longer than is convenient; the other, that they should be sent to Milan. For, although Monseigneur de Chaumont, being of French race and a native of a barbarous country, cares little for such things—unless, indeed, it were a head of Father Bacchus, the god of wine!—there are many good antiquaries in Milan who know the true value of these precious fragments. So he takes advantage of the visit of a Parma traveller, who is on his way home, to send Isabella two heads of Amazons from the newly discovered Tomb at Halicarnassus, erected, it is said, by Artemisia in honour of her husband Mausolus, as well as a marble statuette—without head or limbs, alas! but with the finest draperies—from the Isle of Naxos. “And although it is sadly mutilated,” he adds, “I beg Your Signory to take it with a glad heart and serene brow, for I think it will not displease Andrea Mantegna nor my own Zoan Cristoforo, if these two are still present in human form among us.” But when Fra Sabbà’s letter (*ex clara Rhodo*) was written, on the 16th of April 1507, Cristoforo had already gone to Rome, and Messer Andrea had been dead many months.

These things, “contrary to their custom,” as Sabbà remarks, reached their destination safely, and brought him a grateful letter from the Marchesa,

“that happy Madonna who shines as the sun among the smaller stars.” Unluckily, his search for antiques was interrupted by a serious illness, and when he was about to land at Halicarnassus, after a two months’ cruise, in the depth of winter, the sudden appearance of twenty armed Turkish galleys forced him to beat a retreat, without ever seeing the noble Tomb which was the object of his journey. When he suggested that the Grand Master should present Isabella with a marble sea-god clasping a nymph in his arms, which had lately been sent him from Halicarnassus, His Reverence replied, “like a person of little knowledge in these matters, that he could not send so insignificant a figure to so great a lady, and I dared say no more,” adds Sabbà, “for the least contradiction makes him as difficult to handle as a prickly broom.” Another marble vase, on which Sabbà also had his eye, was, unluckily, converted by the same dignitary into a wine-cooler, so that all he could send Isabella that time was a bundle of a sweet-scented wood called *calamus*, “which takes a most beautiful polish, and would make a fine lyre or viol in the hands of any good instrument maker.” But in his secret soul, as he tells his dear lady, he cherishes a magnificent dream, which, if carried out, would give her glorious city a new splendour. This is nothing less than the removal to Mantua of the noble and celebrated Tomb lately discovered at Halicarnassus. He has already spoken to the captain of an Italian ship and a Cremona engineer, both of whom assure him this could easily be managed, at comparatively small expense. But before this splendid dream could be carried into execution, the leave of absence arrived, for which Fra Sabbà had so long pined

and he left Rhodes with joy, only regretting that he had never seen Artemisia's Mausoleum.

Before his departure, he obtained the Grand Master's leave to send the marble sea-god to Mantua, and managed to smuggle a marble head from Chios and another fine fragment from Delos among his own baggage.

In July 1508, Fra Sabbà reached Rome after his three years' exile, and to his great joy was invited to enter the service of the Vicar-General of his Order in that city. He remained in Rome till 1516, when he was appointed Prior of a house of Knights of S. John near Faenza. Here he lived till an advanced old age, enjoying books and leisure, and writing the *Ricordi*, in which he describes himself as "a poor Knight, whose little studio is adorned with a head of St. John Baptist by Donatello and a St. Jerome in alabaster by a Lombard master, the finest I have ever seen, and can also boast several *intarsiatura* pictures by Fra Damiano da Bergamo."¹

Here he received visits from Cardinal Bembo and many of his old friends, and in 1529 had the honour of entertaining His Holiness Pope Clement VII. when he came to crown the Emperor Charles V. at Bologna. Fra Sabbà sent Isabella the antiques which he had brought from Rhodes, as soon as he landed in Italy, but we never learn if he saw the Marchesa again.

¹ Luzio *op. cit.* ; Peluso in *Arch. St. Lomb.*, 1876, p. 370.

CHAPTER XXII

1501—1510

Isabella's library in the Grotta—Her relations with Aldo Manuzio—
Letters of Lorenzo da Pavia and of Aldo—The Aldine editions
of classics—Isabella's letters to Aldo—He is thrown into prison
on Mantuan territory—Letter of the Emperor Maximilian to
Isabella on his behalf—Death of Aldo Manuzio—Lorenzo
da Pavia's last letters to Isabella—His journey to Rome and
death.

BESIDES paintings, antiques, and medals, the Grotta of the Corte Vecchia contained the choicest treasures of Isabella d'Este's library, safely kept on shelves under lock and key. Here were placed those rare manuscripts of Greek and Latin authors which she loved to collect, the French and Spanish romances in which she took so much pleasure, and the richly illuminated and sumptuously bound volumes of original poems presented to her by living writers, and dedicated to her in flowery epistles.

"Ask Maddalena for the key of the Grotta," she wrote from Milan, in the summer of 1514, to Gian Giacomo Calandra, "and take the *Carcere d'Amore*¹ out of my library and send it to me here." Again, two years earlier, her friend the Venetian patrician, Carlo Francesco Valerio, wrote to beg for the loan of the Marchesa's two editions of the *Cento Novelle*, one of which he had seen in the Grotta, the other in M. Giacomo Calandra's Camerino.²

¹ The Spanish romance, *La Carcel d'Amor*, by Diego di San Pedro.

² Yriarte, *Gazette d. B. Arts*, 1895.



[Photo, From, Mantova.

SALA. CASTELLO DI MANTOVA.

Calandra, one of the most cultivated among the younger Mantuan scholars, acted as librarian for the Marchesa, and afterwards succeeded his father in the office of Castellan. In 1516, he wrote to her in great concern, saying that while he was ill in bed the lock of the library had been broken open, and several volumes taken out of the shelves, while the others were left in such confusion that it was difficult to open the doors without hurting the books.¹

In July 1501, Isabella wrote to her agent Trotti: "We wish to have the works of all the best authors to adorn our studio." This same year she was able to enrich her collection with the first of those famous editions of classical authors that were being printed at Venice by Aldo Manuzio.

On the 8th of July 1501, she wrote to Lorenzo to inquire about the Virgil which was the first of the series, and had appeared in April: "Some Virgils printed in a small size, with minute and almost italic type, have lately been brought here for sale, and please me very much. I hear that the works of Petrarch and Ovid are also to be published, and should like to have them both in parchment."

A fortnight later, Lorenzo sent his mistress the following letter in reply:—

"Most illustrious Madonna,—I saw by your last letter that you wished me to send you the three books, *i.e.* Virgil, Petrarch, and Ovid, in parchment, and so I went at once to the house of Maestro Aldo, who prints these books in a small form and in the finest italic type that you ever saw. It is he who printed the first Greek books, and he is a very dear friend of mine. At present only Virgil is to be

¹ Luzio e Renier in *Giorn. St. d. Lett.*, xxxiii, 5.

had in parchment, so I send it you herewith. The Petrarch is not yet finished, but they tell me it will be ready in about ten days. As yet they have only printed about fifteen copies on this paper, and have already bound them. This has been owing to the dearth of parchment, as they have great difficulty in obtaining the small amount required for the Virgils as well as for the Petrarchs. But Your Signoria shall have Petrarch, which is not yet bound. M. Aldo has promised me to choose a copy for you leaf by leaf, so that yours shall be the finest of all, and the said Maestro will do this all the more gladly because he has been helped in his work by M. Pietro Bembo, who is most devoted to Your Signoria. He it is who has had these poems printed from a manuscript which Petrarch wrote with his own hand, and which I also have held in my hand. It belongs to a Paduan, and is so precious that they have printed the book letter by letter, after the original, with the greatest possible care. As soon as it is finished I will send it to you, as they wish yours to be the first that appears, and hold this to be of good omen, and feel sure the work will obtain a great success since Your Excellency will have had the first copy. After the Petrarch, Dante will be printed, in the same shape and type, and after Dante, Ovid, which I think they will begin towards the end of September, but the Dante in about twenty days; and I beg you to seek for some goat-skin paper, which should be clear and very white and fine and even, not thick in one place and thin in another, because formerly I have seen beautiful paper in Mantua. The great difficulty is to find good paper for the Dante and Ovid. They will be of the same size as the Petrarch, with the sheet whole. Your

Highness may trust me to do my utmost. I mean you to have something as rare and incomparable as Your Most Excellent Highness herself. And nothing in the world pleases me more than to obey your orders, remembering the kindness which you have ever shown me. The Virgil and Petrarch, they say, will cost no less than 3 ducats apiece.—Your servant, LORENZO DA PAVIA.”¹ Venice, July 26, 1501.

The Marchesa was delighted to think of the honour that Maestro Aldo was about to pay her, and wrote back to say she was eagerly expecting the Virgil, which, however, her servant Franceschino had been unable to bring, and promised to send to Parma for the fine *carta pecora*, of which there was none in Mantua. True to his word, on the 3rd of August Lorenzo sent his mistress the promised Petrarch, unbound, saying he has no doubt she will prefer to cover it with some precious material and adorn it with silver clasps. But he has lately seen, in the hands of a merchant who has just arrived from Flanders, the finest binding and silver clasps in the world, and has obtained a promise from him that he will take a Virgil and Petrarch with him to Flanders to be bound in the same fashion and return them before Christmas. The Marchesa eagerly accepted the merchant's offer, and her two copies of Petrarch were sent to be bound in Flanders. But, instead of sending them back at Christmas, the Flemish binder kept them till Whitsuntide, and Lorenzo confessed that he was not altogether satisfied with the success of his experiment. “I send Your Excellency

¹ Baschet, *Alde Manuce*; A. F. Didot, *Alde Manuce et l'Hellénisme à Venise*, p. 170; also A. Luzio in *Giorn. St. d. Lett.*, vol. xxxiii. p. 18, for the correct text.

the two Petrarchs which were bound in Flanders. They might, it seems to me, have been better finished, but, to say the truth, I am in the habit of thinking that a thing for you is never so perfect but that it might be still more so." But, whatever Isabella thought of the binding, she was charmed with the books themselves. These exquisite editions, printed in handy little volumes on the finest of paper, exactly suited her fine taste. In November 1502, she ordered another Petrarch and Dante, and by degrees the whole series issued by the Aldine press found their way into her library. A beautiful little copy of the Virgil printed in July 1501, bound in dark green and gold morocco, with illuminated capitals and margins, is still preserved in the British Museum. It belonged to Isabella's second son, Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga, and bears the date 1527, in his own handwriting.

In 1503, the great printer himself wrote straight to Isabella, begging her to intercede with her husband for a certain Federico Ceresara, a Mantuan by birth, who had killed his own brother in a fit of rage, and had been in prison for this crime during two years, to the great distress of the unhappy mother, who was thus deprived of both her sons. The request was granted, and, partly out of gratitude to the Marchesa, but still more in token of his admiration for her love of letters, Aldo sent her a new volume which he published in July 1504, with the following epistle in elegant Latin:—

"Aldus to Isabella, Princess of Mantua, sends greeting. During these last days I received a visit from Battista Scalona [the Marquis's secretary, whom Isabella had sent to Venice, and charged to bring back Bellini's *Presepio* with him]—a youth distinguished

by his rare learning. As we conversed together, we spoke of you, and naturally dwelt on the favour shown to all scholars and men of excellence by Your Majesty, who are yourself as learned as you are saintly and virtuous. My respect and admiration for you is now even greater than it was before, and I desire, as soon as possible, to render you a further act of homage by dedicating one of my books to Your Majesty. Meanwhile, allow me to send you as a gift the Life of Apollonius of Tyana, with the Tract of Eusebius against Hierocles in Greek and Latin, and the verses of Gregory Nazianzen in a Latin translation, which have been lately published by me and are not unworthy to be read by you, hoping they will please Your Majesty. And, although I know they are not worthy to come into your divine hands in their present unadorned condition, I send them none the less, encouraged by my dear Scalona and trusting to your indulgence, since, as you are aware, those who have no incense to offer on the altar of the Gods are allowed to bring milk, salt, and flour. They will at least be a token of my respect for Your Majesty.”¹

On the 16th of May 1505, Isabella begged Aldo to send her copies of all the Latin books which he had printed in this small edition, excepting the Virgil, which she had already. “And when you print fresh volumes,” she adds, “do not forget to print some on fine paper for us, and that as quickly as possible. Please let us know the price, and we will send you the money at once.”

Aldo replied on the 23rd: “I have received Your Excellency’s letter saying that you wish to have all my little books on vellum. At present I

¹ Baschet, *Alde Manuce*.

only have these: Martial, Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius, unbound, and Horace, with Juvenal and Persius, bound and illuminated. If Your Highness pleases, I will send you these immediately. As to the future, I will obey Your Illustrious Highness's commands."¹

But the insatiable Marchioness still asked for more. On the 27th she wrote again: "Messer Aldo,—You would give us singular pleasure if you would send us a copy of all your little editions on vellum, not bound, like the Petrarch, which is exceptionally fine; and if they suit us, we will send you the money, and, if not, return them at once. If you will do this, we should be infinitely obliged. Remember, whenever you print any more works in this form, always to print one for us on vellum, as we have written before."

On the 9th of June, Aldo sent Isabella all the books which he had in stock printed on vellum, by the hands of a kinsman of his wife, Giovanni d'Asola, with a note informing her of their different prices. "Martial, Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius, and Lucan unbound; Horace, Juvenal, and Persius bound together, with illuminated capitals. This last volume is priced at 6 ducats, or at least 4." Martial, "4 ducats, or at least 3." Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius, "3 ducats, or at least $2\frac{1}{2}$ "; and Lucan, "3 ducats, or at least $2\frac{1}{2}$." But, much as Isabella liked the books, she did not choose to give the price which Aldo asked. She sent them back on the 30th of June, with the following curt note:—

"M. Aldo,—The four volumes on vellum which you have sent us, are pronounced by every one who

¹ D'Arco, *Arch. St. It.*, App. ii. 312.

has seen them, to be twice as dear as they ought to be. We have given them back to your messenger, who does not deny the truth of this, but excuses you, saying that your partners will not take less. All the same, when you print any more, at a fair price, and on finer paper, with more careful corrections, we shall be glad to see them, and hope still to be served by you.”¹

A fortnight later a strange adventure befell the great printer on Mantuan territory. On the 17th of July 1506, as he and Federico Ceresara were returning from Milan, where Aldo had been examining certain manuscripts before he undertook the publication of Virgil's smaller poems, they were arrested at Castelromano on the Mantuan frontier. Federico fled, and managed to cross a river near Asola on foot, leaving his horse and a bag containing Aldo's clothes and precious manuscripts in the hands of the Mantuan sentries.² Two thieves had, it appears, lately escaped from prison, and the soldiers took Aldo and his companion for the missing criminals. In vain the scholar protested that he was Aldo Romano, the printer of Venice, a person well known both to the Marquis and Marchioness of Mantua, and honoured by the favour of the Emperor Maximilian. He was thrown into a damp and pestilential dungeon, where he languished during four days, unable to discover the reason of his arrest, when, as he remarked in the letter which he addressed to the Marquis, “he ought rather to have been protected on Mantuan territory than ill-treated, since he was en-

¹ A. Baschet, *Alde Manuce*; A. F. Didot, *Alde Manuce et l'Hellénisme à Venise*, pp. 275, 276.

² Luzio in *Giorn. St. Lett. It.*, vi. 276.

gaged in seeking to bring new glory to the Mantuan poet, Virgil." But the officers of justice were deaf to his appeals, and it needed the powerful intercession of the Venetian Governor of Asola, of the French Vice-Chancellor of Milan, and of Aldo's old pupil and patron, Alberto Pio of Carpi, who was fortunately at Mantua that week, before his release could be finally effected.

On the 25th of July, having at length recovered his freedom, he addressed a reproachful letter to the Marquis, saying: "If I had remained two days more in the horrid place where I was shut up, I must have died. But, thank God, I see in this grievous injury a punishment for my old sins against Heaven." The Marquis, to do him justice, sent the printer a full and ample apology for the unfortunate mistake which so nearly cost the great scholar his life, and restored Aldo's manuscripts and clothes, with renewed assurances of his favour. Isabella was at Sacchetta at the time, owing to the plague, and probably never heard of Aldo's imprisonment until he was set at liberty. But when, four years later, the wars of the League of Cambray desolated Venetian territory, and forced Aldo to suspend his works, she proved a good friend to him, and was able to restore his wife's property at Asola, which had been confiscated by the Mantuan authorities. On this occasion, the Emperor Maximilian addressed a Latin letter to the Marchesa, who was governing Mantua during her husband's imprisonment at Venice, recommending "our dear and faithful servant, Aldo Romano," to her favourable notice, and expressing his conviction that the great printer was equally beloved by her on account of the splendid services which he has rendered to letters.¹

¹ A. F. Didot, *op. cit.*

Messer Aldo died in 1515. His friend Lorenzo da Pavia only survived him two years, and kept up an active correspondence with Isabella to the end of his life. In March 1514, he wrote to tell her of the fine clavichord which he had just finished for Pope Leo X., and which he was about to take to Rome himself.

“Most illustrious Madonna, — Your Highness must forgive me if your instrument is not yet ready, but I have been very busy and have had much anxiety. However, I am still alive, and know my illustrious lady will be glad to hear that I have finished the large and splendid clavichord which was ordered by Pope Leo, and is eagerly desired by His Holiness. It is ready now, and I hope after Easter to go to Rome with the said instrument. It really is the finest instrument that I have ever made. Here indeed is true harmony! What a joy it would be if only you could hear it! I enclose a copy of certain verses which are carved in Roman letters on the said instrument. One set was composed by Navagero, the other by Zoan Aurelio, but I have chosen those of Navagero, as they seem to me the most appropriate. When I am in Rome, I will do my best to find some fine antiques for Your Highness.”¹

Lorenzo’s journey to Rome finally took place in June. Before his departure he wrote to tell the Marchesa that he was intending to visit her daughter, Leonora, the young Duchess of Urbino, on the way, and congratulated her on the birth of her grandson, which had taken place on the 2nd of April.²

“In a few days’ time I hope to go to Rome, and

¹ Dr. Carlo dell’Acqua, *Lorenzo Gusnasco da Pavia*, p. 26.

² *Littà Famiglie*; Dennistoun, “Dukes of Urbino,” vol. iii. 82

intend to stop at Urbino and pay my respects to our illustrious Duchess. I rejoice sincerely with Your Highness over the birth of her son, and her good health. And I am taking her several fine things, as well as those which you ordered. Farewell.—Your LORENZO OF PAVIA.” June 1514.

We do not hear whether Lorenzo was still in Rome that autumn when the Marchesa paid her first visit to the Eternal City, but no doubt she saw the wonderful instrument which he had made for her old friend, Pope Leo X. Two years afterwards we learn from a little note which the Marchesa addressed during a brief absence from home to the Neapolitan musician, Andrea Cossa, that this faithful servant and true artist had passed away.

“We thank you very much for sending us the embroidered cap, which has reached us safely, and also for giving us certain information of the death of Messer Lorenzo. The news had already reached Mantua, but we did not yet know if the report were true.”¹ Vegliana, May 4, 1517.

¹ C. dell' Acqua, *op. cit.*

CHAPTER XXIII

1509—1511

War of the League of Cambray—Defeat of the Venetians at Vaila—Capture of the Marquis of Mantua near Legnago—His imprisonment at Venice—Isabella administers the Government—Her efforts to obtain Francesco's release—Leonora goes to Urbino—Presents of Isabella to the Bishop of Gurk and Queen of France—The Pope grants absolution to Venice and obtains the release of Francesco Gonzaga—Federico sent as hostage to Rome—His life at the Vatican and visits to Bologna and Urbino.

ON the 10th of December 1508, the secret treaty known as the League of Cambray was concluded between Pope Julius II., the Emperor, Louis XII., the Duke of Ferrara, and the Marquis of Mantua. The express object of the allies, as stated in the treaty between these powers, was to resist the insatiable ambition of Venice, and compel the Signory to restore their conquests in Romagna and Lombardy. Ever since his accession, Julius II. had openly declared that he meant to cut the claws of the Lion of St. Mark, and now the time for action was ripe. In April 1509, the French army crossed the frontier, and at the same time the papal troops, under the Duke of Urbino, invaded Romagna.

On the 14th of May, the Venetians were completely defeated on the plains of Ghiar' Adda or Vaila, a day as disastrous to the Republic, in the words of contemporary writers, as the battle of

Cannæ. The power of the Republic was crushed at a single blow. "In one day," says Machiavelli, "the Venetians lost all that they had acquired with so much labour in 800 years."¹ Not only were they compelled to surrender their conquests in Romagna, but all the Venetian towns on the mainland, even the strongly fortified cities of Verona, Vicenza, and Padua, opened their gates to the victors.

Meanwhile the Mantuan territory was overrun by ill-disciplined French troops, whom Francesco Gonzaga found more tiresome than open enemies. And Isabella, writing to thank him for a present of partridges, on the 22nd of June, remarked, laughingly, that even this heat cannot make her thin, but that, if she suffered as much fatigue and worry as he had done from these French rascals (*poltroni di francesi*), perhaps she would no longer be so plump. A month afterwards her high spirits received a sudden check. On the 17th of July, the Venetians succeeded in recovering Padua, and on the 9th of August, Francesco Gonzaga was himself surprised and taken prisoner at Isola della Scala, a village near Legnago, on the Adige. He was in the act of taking a company of horse to join the imperial artillery in the siege of Padua, and was spending the night in perfect security at Isola, when a Venetian force, commanded by Luca Malvezzi, secretly surrounded the farm-house where he slept. As soon as the alarm was given, the Marquis escaped through a back door, but was found by four peasants hiding in a field of maize and taken prisoner, first to Legnago, and afterwards to Venice. The joy of the captors was great, especially as

¹ *Discorsi*, iii. 31.

Francesco's camp, with all his silver plate, his sumptuous hangings and pavilions, his rich furniture and splendid suits of armour, fell into their hands, together with "some of the finest horses in the world."¹ Both in Rome and Mantua the consternation was great. The choleric old Pope flung his cap on the ground, and cursed St. Peter aloud. The loyal subjects of the Marquis were filled with a sense of dismay, approaching to panic, when they heard that their lord had been borne by his captors in triumph to Venice, and imprisoned in the strong tower of the Ducal Palace, known as the Torresella, which was provided with new bolts and bars for the occasion.² But Isabella's courage and fortitude rose to the occasion. In the first pang of her grief she sought the prayers of the spiritual advisers in whom she most relied—Prior Francesco Silvestri, and her Carmelite friends in Mantua. And she also asked the help and advice of an old Ferrarese lawyer, Prisciani, whom she had known from childhood, and who was learned in the arts of astrology. Like all her contemporaries, Isabella had a superstitious belief in astrology, and ordered her actions and movements by the courses of the stars. Her horoscope had been cast by a learned astrologer when she visited Urbino in 1494, and she had been especially told not to mount a horse, a warning which she obeyed for some time, until her love of riding proved too strong for her good intentions. She still clung, however, to certain deeply rooted prejudices, consulted astrologers as to the future, and refused to set out on a journey or begin an undertaking at

¹ Luigi da Porto, *Lettere storiche*, p. 106.

² Lorenzi, *Monumenti per la storia d. Pal. ducale*, p. 150.

certain conjunctions of the moon and stars. Now in her distress she implored the help of the wise old philosopher, who replied in a long letter, in which Christian faith and superstitious trust in occult powers are curiously blended.

He begins by describing how, as he lay awake at night grieving for her sorrows, a sudden voice told him where to turn for help. He got up, lighted his candle, and, opening his books, discovered that a remarkable and long-expected conjunction between the star of Jove and the Dragon's head would take place on Saturday evening, the 18th of August, at three minutes before half-past seven. "At that precise moment," he continues, "kneel down, and, with hands clasped and eyes raised to heaven, repeat the *Confiteor*, and ask God earnestly to restore your most dear husband safe and well to your side. Repeat this prayer three times, and in a short time the blessing you seek will be granted. And your little sons and daughters might at the same time kneel down and ask for the same grace, so that your prayers may be heard."¹ August 15, 1509.

After this, Isabella dried her tears and faced this new emergency with her wonted energy and presence of mind. She administered public affairs, made preparations for the defence of the realm, and exerted all her powers of diplomacy to obtain her husband's release. She sent envoys, not only to Louis XII. and Maximilian, but even to the Sultan, who readily promised to use his influence with the Doge on Francesco's behalf. But her chief trust was placed in the Pope, and since the best means of enlisting His Holiness's efforts in her cause was

¹ Luzio in *Giorn. St. d. Lett.*, 1900.

to hasten the union of her daughter Leonora with his nephew, the marriage was fixed to take place in the following autumn. In November Duchess Elisabetta herself came to Mantua to fetch the bride, and on the 4th of December Isabella wrote to her old friend Jacopo d'Atri, whom she had sent to plead her husband's cause at the French court: "Here we have been entertaining the Duchess of Urbino and a large and honourable company at great expense, but very gladly. In two or three days she will take back our young Duchess, whom we send with her very willingly, hoping that His Holiness will now show us still greater favour, and this all the more since we hear that His Beatitude desires her and the Duke to come to Rome for the pontifical celebration of their marriage. . . . His Holiness has sent a most beautiful litter for the bride, covered with cloth of silver and gold cords, and borne by two handsome pages in liveries to match, as well as a fine dapple-grey horse with rich trappings. The Duke was on his way here *incognito* to pay us a visit, but when he reached Carpi, he was summoned back in haste by a papal brief, ordering him to lead the troops of the League against Ravenna."¹

On the 9th of December, the wedding-party set out on their journey, which was attended with even more discomforts and adventures than usual. First of all, they left Mantua in so dense a fog that Isabella and her train of courtiers were unable to accompany them beyond the gates, and before they reached their first halting-place, the villa of Gonzaga, they lost their way and wandered for hours in the dark. "The astrologer who fixed the time of their

¹ Luzio e Renier, *Mantova e Urbino*, p. 190, &c.

departure," remarked Isabella in a letter to Rome, "certainly made a false calculation! But we must hope the rest of their journey will prove more prosperous." This was hardly the case. After being entertained with banquets and dances at Modena and Bologna, where the Duchesses lodged in the palace of the Papal Legate, Cardinal Alidosi, they rode on to Faenza, and were nearly drowned in crossing a mountain torrent. So sudden was the rise of the water and so strong the stream that Picenardi had to swim for his life. In a lively letter to the Marchesa he describes how, looking round, he saw the chariot containing two of Leonora's ladies and their luggage floating down the stream, both the oxen harnessed to the car being lifted off their feet by the force of the current! "If you could have seen the faces of Madonna Ginevra and Pasina," he adds, "you would have died of laughing!" At length, after long days of weary travelling over bad roads in torrents of rain, Urbino was safely reached. The young Duke himself rode out to meet them, and kissed his beautiful Duchess, and embraced his "poor lame aunt," as Elisabetta called herself. She was suffering from an acute attack of gout, and after embracing her nephew, gladly returned to her litter. "Then the Duke and his bride," continues Picenardi, "rode through the fine streets of Urbino, and we all escorted the new Duchess to her rooms in the palace. . . . The Duchess has, indeed, made a beautiful entry. All the same, nothing would please the Duke but she must make another to-day. This the Duchess, your sister, would not allow, upon which the Duke flew into a rage, and said he would go away; but our Madonna told him to be

reasonable, and not to behave like a Turk, with other wise words, so that he said no more and remained content. Then Messer Cesare Gonzaga and Count Lodovico da Canossa arrived from Rome with the papal brief, and every one was happy.”¹

The new Duchess made an excellent impression on the whole court, as her mother’s numerous friends hastened to assure her. Amongst others, the witty and accomplished Florentine, Bernardo Dovizi of Bibbiena, who was at Urbino with his master, Cardinal Medici, addressed a long letter to the Marchesa, signing himself by his favourite nickname of *Il Moccicone* (the dolt or fool), and expressing his great regret that he had been hindered by illness from accepting Isabella’s invitation to Mantua. The Duchess, he declared with pretended indignation, had evidently whispered false words into the Marchesa’s ears, and made her believe that his malady was feigned. “How in the world Her Excellency’s lips could fashion so great a lie, or drop such poison into your small and delicate ears, I know not! If I was not really ill, may God make me fall ill again! Could I have had more honourable company or a pleasanter journey, or have arrived in a place which I desire to see more passionately?” After many pages in the same strain, the witty secretary proceeds to speak in the warmest terms of the youthful princess, whose charms were the talk of the court. “Her manners and bearing are perfect. Every one says the same . . . principally Madonna Emilia, whose judgment you will value on account of her cleverness and goodness. Madonna is delighted with her.

¹ Luzio e Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

but in this case great love may very well make her blind. What more shall I say? In Madonna Leonora we see all her lady mother.”¹

These letters from old friends were gratifying, for the expenses of the wedding and the large dowry upon which the Pope and Francesco Maria's mother had insisted when the original contract was drawn up in Duke Guidobaldo's lifetime, were a heavy strain on the reduced finances of Mantua. And in her anxiety to gratify the Pope and his kinsfolk, Isabella had provided her daughter with clothes and jewels of great value, and had, as she took care to inform her Roman agent Brognolo, considerably exceeded the amount specified in the contract.

But neither for lack of money nor any other cause did she relax her efforts to obtain her husband's release. Since the Marquis found the strict confinement in which he was kept at Venice very tedious, Isabella sent his favourite tenor Marchetto, the lute-player Angelo Testagrossa, and several other court singers to beguile his lonely hours. But they were only allowed to visit him on rare occasions, and the severity of the Venetian authorities, and the great expense to which they were put, constrained the Marchesa to recall them in January. By Francesco's especial wish, she sent him a copy of her own portrait by Costa, as well as one of his newly-married daughter, which he presented after his release to his friend the Senator Alvise Marcello, in whose palace they were seen fifteen years later by Marc Antonio Michiel. At the same time she made costly presents to influential personages at the French and German courts, in the

¹ Luzzio e Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

hope of furthering her object. She desired her secretary, Scalona, to present Matthäus Lang, Bishop of Gurk, the all-powerful imperial legate, with a fine silver vase, enamelled with scenes from the life of Romulus;¹ and she sent a Madonna by Costa as a gift to the Queen of France. This picture had been ordered by the Marquis a year before, and the painter had begged Isabella to give him the benefit of her advice and opinion on the work before it finally left his shop. Now she wrote to Jacopo d'Atri, on the 13th of January 1510, telling him that she was glad of this occasion to offer a Madonna to our great Queen, and saying that she had chosen this Madonna by Costa, which was as fine as any painting in the world. On the 24th the precious picture, "the same," she writes, "which Monseigneur de Tyande admired in our Camerino," after being retouched by the painter, was given to Jacopo Soardino to take to France, together with letters to Jacopo d'Atri, desiring him to lose no opportunity of impressing Isabella's great wish for her husband's deliverance on the Queen.² These letters crossed despatches from the ambassador, informing her that Louis was shortly coming to Milan, and reporting a curious conversation which had been overheard between the King and Queen.

Anne of Brittany, it seems, at one time thought seriously of accompanying the King to Italy, and made extensive preparations for the journey, which was afterwards abandoned. "The wise King," wrote Jacopo d'Atri to the Marchesa, "warned her frankly that she would find a great contrast between her own

¹ Luzio, *Federico*, p. 6.

² Yriarte, *Gazette d. B. Arts*, 1896; Gruyer, *op. cit.*, ii. 211

appearance and that of our ladies, and that she must exert herself if she would compare with you, telling her that Your Excellency in the first instance, and after you, the Duchess of Ferrara and many others, would prove dangerous rivals, while, if she visited another part of Italy, the sight of the new bride, your daughter, would be enough to crush her to the ground, so highly does His Most Christian Majesty esteem Madonna Leonora's incomparable beauty, prudence, and virtue! Since this conversation the most wise Queen, who says little herself—which is in itself a great proof of her wisdom—has been convinced that she cannot rival our Italian princesses, and has decided to take with her four noble ladies: the Marchesa di Monferrato—whom she calls French—Madame de Nevers, Madame de Longueville, and a lady of Brittany, who are all beautiful and highly esteemed. She herself intends to wear black or tan cloth, and no fine robes, so as not to enter into rivalry with you, feeling sure that the least of you would surpass her in this respect. Which, in my opinion, will not be the case, for if she comes, as she wishes extremely to do, she will appear in all her pomp and glory, and make herself known as the Queen, not only of France, but of the whole universe. I do not think that she will make any show of brocade or fine clothes, but her foot-guards will amaze all eyes, and she herself, who is so glorious in soul, will show you things which have never yet been imagined either in France or Italy, but which she has the means to do if she chooses. And of jewels also she has her share. But I cannot help saying that it would be well if the caps and low bodices, which are now fashionable in Italy, were as decent as they are

here. These caps, which make women look like boys, and this fashion of laying the breast bare, will never please foreigners, and if those French who have been in Italy praise them, they only do so out of flattery. I have not tried to deny this, because, after all, honesty is the best policy. So prepare yourself, dear Madonna, if Her Majesty comes, to do honour to the Latin name.”¹

Isabella, on her part, expressed great delight to hear of His Christian Majesty’s intention to visit Italy, and confidently expected the King’s presence at Milan would lead to the release of her husband, “even,” she adds, “if it should be necessary to have recourse to arms.” In a postscript she thanked D’Atri for the portrait of the court-jester Triboulet, and renews her request for a French vocabulary, evidently desiring to improve her defective French. But Louis had grown indifferent to the war against Venice, and took no active steps to obtain the release of his ally. Both he and the Emperor had learnt to look with suspicion on Francesco Gonzaga’s intrigues, and asked the Marchesa to place her eldest son Federico as a hostage in their hands before they approached the Republic on behalf of her husband. The mere idea of parting from her darling boy filled the poor mother’s heart with anguish, and when Maximilian renewed his proposal, Isabella sent this indignant answer to Donato di Preti, her envoy at the imperial court :—

“As to the demand for our dearest first-born son Federico, besides being a cruel and almost inhuman thing for any one who knows the meaning of a mother’s love, there are many causes which render it difficult

¹ Luzio, *Nuova Antologia*, 1896.

and impossible. Although we are quite sure that his person would be well cared for and protected by His Majesty, how could we wish him to run the risk of this long and difficult journey, putting aside the child's tender and delicate age? And you must know what comfort and solace, in his father's present unhappy condition, we find in the presence of this dear son, the hope and joy of all our people and subjects. To deprive us of him would be to deprive us of life itself, and of all we count good and precious. If you take Federico away you might as well take away our life and state at once; so you may frankly reply, once for all, that we will suffer any loss rather than part from our son, and this you may take to be our deliberate and unchanging resolution."¹

In these circumstances, Isabella once more turned to the Pope for help. The fiery old Pontiff was satisfied to feel he had humbled Venice, and lent a ready ear to the proposals of peace that were made to him by the ambassadors of the Republic. At length, on the 24th of February, he solemnly pronounced the absolution of Venice, while the five envoys, clad in scarlet, knelt at his feet for an hour in the portico of St. Peter's. After the *Miserere* had been sung, the great doors were thrown open, and the Venetians were allowed to enter the church once more.² Isabella naturally hoped this reconciliation would lead to her husband's release, especially as the Duke of Urbino had taken his bride to Rome, where the Pope welcomed them warmly, and celebrated their arrival with a succession of festivities. But when Francesco Maria ventured to plead his father-

¹ Luzio, *Federico*, p. 7.

² Brosch, *Papst Julius II.*, 288. Pastor, "Hist. of the Popes," vi. 319.

in-law's cause, the Pope broke into a furious passion, and drove him out of his presence, using the most violent language, and reproached him with trying to play the part of Valentino and to govern the Papacy. Leonora tried to approach the Pope, with no better result, although he expressed great affection for her, and Bembo wrote from Rome in April that "the new Duchess was really a most beautiful child, as modest and gentle as possible, and already wise beyond her years."¹ Only when he was watching the races held at carnival from the balcony of S. Pietro, His Holiness remarked, with evident satisfaction: "The Marquis of Mantua has already won two palliums; I expect he will win this too, and then we shall hear the people cry, Mantova!" upon which the two Duchesses of Urbino seized the opportunity to implore him to remember the captive Marquis, and His Holiness replied kindly: "Have a little patience, my children." Presently, the Gonzaga colours were seen flying across the course, and the Marquis's horse came in the winner, leaving more than forty others behind him in the race. A great shout of "Mantova! Mantova! Turco! Turco!" rang through the air, to the delight of not only Leonora and Elisabetta, but of the old Pope, who laughed heartily, and went home in high good humour.² This incident was duly reported to the Marchesa by an eye-witness, the Urbino scribe, Picenardi, and helped to revive her drooping hopes. But when at length Julius II. desired the Venetians to release Francesco, saying that he had need of his services, the Signory refused to give him their prisoner without receiving some pledge in return,

¹ *Lettere*, iii. 42.

² Luzio, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

and several months passed before the terms of his liberation could be arranged. At length, in July 1510, the Marquis was set free, and went to Bologna to meet the Pope, who appointed him Gonfaloniere of the Church in the place of Alfonso d'Este. At the same time, his ten-year-old son Federico was sent to Rome by request of the Doge, to remain in the Pope's charge as hostage for his father's good behaviour. Since Isabella was forced to part from her darling child, there was some consolation in feeling that in Rome he would be surrounded by friends, and grow up in the midst of the most brilliant and polished society of the day. As it was, the parting cost her many tears, and she desired Matteo Ippoliti and Stazio Gadio, to whose care she committed him, to send her daily accounts, and gave the boy a precious relic in the shape of a bracelet containing the Gospel of St. John, to keep him from harm on his long journey.

After spending a few days in his father's company at Bologna, where Francia, as we know, painted his portrait, Federico reached Rome in time to embrace his aunt, Duchess Elisabetta, who was leaving for Urbino, and sent a kind little note to his mother, telling her how well the boy looked. By the Pope's orders, Federico and his suite were lodged in the Belvedere, that villa on the heights commanding an exquisite view of the Campagna and Alban Hills, which Bramante had lately enlarged and connected with the Vatican. Here, in the spacious court planned by the great architect, planted with orange groves and adorned with fountains and ancient sarcophagi, Julius II. now placed his unrivalled collection of antique statues, including the famous Laocoon and the so-called

Belvedere Apollo. Here, too, the Hercules described by Giorgio da Negro ponto, in his letter to Isabella d'Este, was erected at the entrance of the court, with the inscription *Procul este profani* above the portico.

"His Highness," wrote Stazio Gadio, "is lodged in the finest rooms of this palace, and takes his meals in a most beautiful Loggia overlooking the Campagna, which may well be called the Belvedere. He spends all day walking about these halls and the garden of orange trees and pines, which affords him the greatest delight and amusement, but he does not neglect his singing, often sending for his master himself, and also repeats the office every day, and will no doubt attend to his lessons when Maestro Francesco Vigilio arrives." This was his tutor, who had been left at Bologna ill, and was never able to undertake the journey to Rome.

Isabella, however, was very anxious that the boy's education should not be neglected, and in her letters continually urged him to practise his singing and attend to his studies, as well as devoting time to riding and knightly exercises. As a small child, he was very backward in reading, but quick at learning by heart, and at eight years old could repeat long passages of Ovid, and went about the rooms of the Castello singing them in his clear treble. But if his absence from home interrupted the young prince's regular studies, Isabella realised that he was learning much in other ways. "You have every opportunity of acquiring knowledge and necessary experience in Rome," she wrote to the boy; "you can enjoy yourself and at the same time study letters, which is far more important for a prince than for private individuals."

She rejoiced especially to hear of the interest which he took in classical antiquities, and of his daily visits to the Coliseum and Capitol or Forum in company with the Aretine, who acted as his guide among the ruins of ancient Rome. Of all the antique statues in the Belvedere, Federico admired the Laocoon most, and sent his mother word that he longed to send to her this divine work, and knew how much she would admire it. The great Lombard goldsmith Caradosso, who was now working for the Pope in Rome, offered to make a small relief of the famous group in beaten gold for Federico to wear in his cap, and suggested that he should send a copy to his mother, but the Marchesa regretfully declined the artist's proposal for lack of money to reward the old artist as he deserved. All the same, she was pleased to hear of her son's affectionate remembrance, and thanked him for wishing to send her the fine antiques which he saw, remarking that this desire and the pleasure which he took in these things were sure signs of a good nature and gentle spirit.¹

"The more letters you write and the longer they are, telling me of Federico, our son, and of other events at court, the more gladly I read them," wrote Isabella to the trusted servants who had accompanied the boy to Rome, and certainly her injunctions were faithfully obeyed. Every day, Stazio or Grossino or Ippoliti informed her of the young prince's occupations and amusements, of his rides and walks in Rome and the Campagna, the clothes he wore, and the visits which he paid or received. One day he was shown the Papal Treasury in the Castel S. Angelo, with all its stores of wealth—the twelve gold images of the

¹ Luzio, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

Apostles, the papal tiara valued at 80,000 ducats, and fine chests filled with crosses, jewelled mitres, and vessels of gold and silver. One of the officials placed the tiara on Federico's head, upon which he exclaimed: "No! I will not be Pope, but Captain of the Church," brandishing a spear in his hand as he spoke, to the admiration of the bystanders, who called him a young Achilles. Stazio took care to tell the Marchesa how much enthusiasm the handsome boy excited as he rode on his richly harnessed steed through the streets of Rome, clad in white and gold brocade, with a cap of purple velvet on his fair curls; and he praised his liberality to the singers and musicians who came to amuse him in the Vatican gardens on fine summer evenings, remarking that he was always anxious to give them more than Maestro Luca, the doctor, thought fit. But Isabella had no wish to encourage these inclinations, and, when she heard that Federico had given one of his servants a gold-embroidered cap, sharply rebuked Ippoliti for allowing this, saying it would have been quite another thing if Federico had taken it off his own head to give it to some courtier as a sign of favour, but that servants ought to know better than to ask such things of their master, above all of a child. At the same time, the Marchesa enjoined Ippoliti to mind his own manners and not to reprove the prince or strike him in public, but treat him with the respect due to his rank.

Meanwhile the Pope, whose fury was now turned against France and her allies, declared war on the Duke of Ferrara and went to Bologna to join his army. There Federico joined him at the end of September, and with his bright young face and

charming manners quickly won the old man's heart, as the Pope's attendants soon discovered. He became his constant companion in every expedition, and the sight of the child would often pacify him in his most violent fits of rage.

His mother, however, insisted that his lessons should be resumed, and he read Virgil and wrote Latin themes, while the old Pope took the field himself in the depths of a severe winter, and braved frost and snow in the trenches of Mirandola. In February, Federico was allowed to go to Urbino, where he spent a joyous carnival in the company of his sister and aunt, and only returned to Rome in April. At Urbino he was the pet and plaything of the whole court. Suppers and dances, plays and masquerades were given every evening in his honour; the days were spent in singing with his sister Leonora, and Emilia Pia, Giuliano dei Medici, Pietro Bembo, and the violinist Jacopo di San Secondo all made much of him for his mother's sake. Here too he found a new sister in the person of Margarita Gonzaga, an illegitimate daughter of the Marquis, who had been born before his marriage, and brought up at the court of Urbino by her aunt Elisabetta. This fair and charming maiden, who is often mentioned in the *Cortegiano* as well as in Castiglione and Bembo's letters, was betrothed for some years to Alberto Pio, the pupil and friend of Aldo Manuzio, but the marriage was deferred and ultimately abandoned, owing to the seizure of Carpi, first by the French and afterwards by the Duke of Ferrara. The next suitor for her hand was the wealthy banker Agostino Chigi, whose suit was favourably received by the Marquis, and who showed Federico great attention

during his stay in Rome. But the idea of union with a man old enough to have been her father seems to have repelled the fair Margarita herself, and Chigi wisely refrained from pressing a suit which he saw was distasteful, and consoled himself with a wife of less exalted degree. Another correspondent of the Marchesa, who had seen Federico at Bologna, sent her glowing accounts of the boy. This was *il bel Bernardo*, as Bibbiena was called by his friends. The Marquis's anger had lately been roused by the discovery of some intrigues among his enemies at Florence, in which Cardinal Medici was accused of taking part, and that prelate charged his secretary to assure his *compare*, the Marchesa, that he was as absolutely ignorant of the matter as the Grand Turk himself, and remained as ever entirely devoted to herself and her family. Bibbiena took occasion of this opportunity to tell Isabella that he had been supping that evening with her charming son, and was surprised to find him quick and clever, as well as wise and serious beyond his years. "O Madonna!" he exclaims,¹ "you have indeed a rare son, and I think you will find more comfort in him than in anything else in the world." This accomplished courtier, it is plain, knew the best way to Isabella's heart.

¹ Luzio, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

CHAPTER XXIV

1511—1512

The Pope's campaign against Ferrara—Isabella's anxiety to restore peace—The Bishop of Gurk at Mantua—Bologna captured by the French—The Duke of Urbino murders Cardinal Alidosi—Dangerous illness of the Pope—His recovery ascribed to Federico's influence—Death of Isabella's pet dog, Aura—The Holy League against France—Victory and death of Gaston de Foix at Ravenna—The French driven out of Italy—Federico at the Vatican—The Belvedere Apollo and Tiber statue—Visit of the Duke of Ferrara to Rome.

THE release of her husband, and the good accounts which she received of her absent son, brought back new happiness into Isabella's life. Duchess Elisabetta and her other friends in Rome satisfied her that the Pope, in spite of his violent bursts of anger, was kindly disposed towards herself and her husband, while Federico inspired him with genuine affection. But the fury with which Julius II. now attacked her brother, and his resolve to conquer Ferrara at all costs, caused her fresh distress. She grieved to see her husband and son-in-law in command of the forces which invaded Alfonso's territory, and used all her influence to bring about the restoration of peace. The Duke of Urbino succeeded in taking Modena and Mirandola, and the Pope satisfied his warlike spirit by climbing the walls on a scaling ladder, and entering the city through the breach made by his guns. But, in spite of these reverses, Alfonso still

kept the papal forces at bay, and the advance of a large French army, under the veteran Trivulzio, to his relief, compelled the Pope to retire to Bologna. A truce was now proclaimed, and, at Isabella's suggestion, ambassadors from England, France, Spain, and Germany met at Mantua to discuss terms of peace.¹ Here the Emperor's favourite minister, Matthäus Lang, Bishop of Gurk, arrived early in March, and was splendidly entertained by the Marchesa.

This haughty German prelate is described by Paride Grassi, papal master of ceremonies, as a tall and handsome man with long fair hair, and the manners of a barbarian.² He assumed royal airs, wore lay dress, and sat down in the Pope's presence with his biretta on his head. But he was by no means insensible to feminine charms, and before long was completely captivated by the clever Marchesa. "The illustrious Signora Marchesana," wrote Guido Silvestri from Mantua to his master, Cardinal d'Este, "is bent on obtaining this peace, although that wretch Casola told her the other day, before us all, that Cupid's arrows were the only weapons she ought to fear, which sent us into fits of laughter! So now we are rejoicing at the prospect of peace, and hope to see all this ruin and misery end happily for the honour of your princely house."³ And Casola himself, a comic poet in the service of Cardinal d'Este, sent his master the following strange account of an interview between the German bishop and the Marchesa. "The other day the Bishop of

¹ Pastor, "Hist. of the Popes," vi. 344.

² Paride Grassi, *Diarii*, ed. Frati, 260, &c

³ Luzio e Renier in *Giorn. St. d. Lett.*, 1900.

Gurk paid the Marchesa a visit, when I caused great amusement by acting as interpreter, and we all laughed till our sides ached." That day politics were not even mentioned. The whole talk was of kissing and romping, merry songs were sung and witty sayings repeated, and all manner of gay fooling went on between the German envoys and Isabella and her ladies. Unfortunately, when Lang proceeded to Bologna, the Pope quite refused to listen to the Emperor's proposals of peace, and the bishop left suddenly, with no attempt to conceal his disgust. Hostilities were immediately resumed, and hardly had the Pope left Bologna, than Trivulzio surprised and defeated the Duke of Urbino's army and seized the town. On the 23rd of May, the Bentivogli returned in triumph, Michel Angelo's bronze statue of Julius II. was overthrown by the mob, and the bronze melted down by Alfonso d'Este and cast into a cannon, which he christened *La Giulia*. The next day the papal legate, Cardinal Alidosi, was openly stabbed in the streets of Ravenna by the Duke of Urbino, who accused him of treacherously surrendering Bologna to the foe. A month afterwards the old Pope returned to Rome, broken in health and worn out with fatigue and anxieties. His armies were defeated, his hopes disappointed. Bologna was lost, and his favourite had been brutally murdered by his own nephew almost before his eyes. But his spirit was as high as ever. He checkmated the revolted Cardinals, who, supported by the Emperor and Louis XII., had summoned a general council at Pisa, by himself proclaiming a general council, to meet at the Lateran in April 1512. And he entered into negotiations with Spain and Venice to form a

league in defence of the Church and to drive the French out of Italy.

At the same time he instituted legal proceedings against his nephew for the murder of Cardinal Alidosi. But his displeasure with the Duke had not diminished his affection for Francesco Maria's young brother-in-law. The boy was his constant companion, both at his meals in the Vatican and in his daily walks and rides. When any of the Cardinals came to dinner, they sat at other tables in the same hall, and Federico alone always ate at the Pope's little table. In the evenings they played backgammon together, or else went out to supper with Agostino Chigi in the gardens of his beautiful new villa in Trastevere.

During that summer Julius the Second's own portrait was painted by Raphael, who introduced His Holiness, wearing the beard which he had vowed not to shave off till the French were driven out of Italy, in his fresco of Pope Gregory IX. giving the Decretals, to the right of the window in the Camera della Segnatura. And, on the 16th of August, Grossino informed Isabella that His Holiness had desired Raphael "to introduce Signor Federico's portrait in a room which he is painting in the palace, and in which he has drawn His Holiness with his beard, from life." In obedience to the Pope's command, Raphael introduced the boy's portrait in his great fresco of the School of Athens. Federico's head appears in the group on the left, behind the Oriental philosopher generally called Averroes, while the young man in a flowing garment of white and gold is said to be his brother-in-law, Francesco Maria.

Early in August, the Pope took Federico with

him to Ostia for a few days' hunting, a sport which he thoroughly enjoyed, and Grossino describes the delight of the old man when he caught a big pheasant : "He laughed loudly, told us all proudly what he had done, and showed his prey to every one."¹ On the Eve of the Assumption he was back in Rome, and attended the solemn function at Vespers, in the Sistine Chapel, when the central portion of Michel Angelo's frescoes on the vault was unveiled.² Three days afterwards, he fell ill with a severe attack of fever, but, with characteristic obstinacy, refused to take either the food or medicine ordered by his doctors. On the 23rd, the Pope was said to be dying. He made his will, and absolved the Duke of Urbino, who had hastened to Rome on hearing of his uncle's illness. "His Holiness is passing away," wrote the Venetian ambassador. "Cardinal Medici tells me he cannot live through the night. The city is in a turmoil. Every one is taking up arms."³ Within the Vatican all was confusion, the servants had disappeared, the rooms were already stripped of their furniture and valuables. At this critical moment Federico's influence over the Pope was shown in a remarkable way, and, according to his attendants, he saved the irascible old man's life. "Throw those cursed medicines out of the window," he cried, and railed at his nephew Francesco Maria and the other relatives who vainly tried to induce him to take nourishment. "Every one was in despair," wrote Stazio Gadio to Isabella, "and His Holiness refused to take anything, but Signor Federico took a cup of broth with two

¹ Luzio, *Federico*, p. 21.

² Pastor, *op. cit.*

³ M. Sanuto, *Diarii*, xii. 482.

yolks of eggs beaten up in it, and carried it himself to the bed of His Holiness, begging him to drink it for his sake and that of our Lady of Loreto. . . . And it is said in Rome that Pope Julius will live, thanks to Signor Federico.”¹

Fortunately the iron will and robust constitution of the sick man triumphed over the state of prostration in which the fever had left him, and he began to eat and drink and scold his servants as vigorously as usual. Three days later, Gadio wrote that his illness was already forgotten.²

While all Rome was in confusion, and the news of the Pope's death was hourly expected, Isabella and her courtiers at Mantua were plunged in grief for a pet dog. The Marchesa's darling Aura, which never left her side, and which she had loved above all others, “the handsomest and most amusing little dog that was ever known,” had been killed by falling over a cliff in flying from the pursuit of a bigger dog. “Her Excellency was seen to shed tears at table this evening,” wrote Calandra to Federico, on the 30th of August, “and she cannot speak of Aura without a sigh!” The poor little dog was laid in a leaden casket, and a fine tomb was prepared for her in a new Loggia which the Marchesa had built that autumn. Meanwhile, not only at Mantua, but in Rome and Ferrara, elegies, epitaphs, sonnets, and epigrams were poured out by the best poets of the day, and the tragic fate of the “chaste and noble Aura” was lamented in Latin and Italian verses, by Tebaldeo and Scalona, Equicola and Celio Calcagnini,

¹ Luzio, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

² Sanuto, xii. 482, &c.; Paride Grassi, *Diarii*; Pastor, *op. cit.*, vi. 370, &c.

and a score of well-known humanists. Federico shared his mother's grief for this lost favourite, and sent her Latin verses in praise of Aura, composed by M. Filippo Beroaldo and others, which are preserved among a host of similar tributes in the Gonzaga archives.¹ But graver cares and heavier sorrows soon came to darken Isabella's life. Francesco Gonzaga's health had suffered from his prolonged captivity and the hardships which he had endured in the winter campaign against Mirandola, and after this he was compelled to give up active service. This enforced inactivity, so contrary to his usual habits, and the incurable malady of which he was a victim, affected his whole being, and made him weak and irresolute, as well as irritable and unhappy. During the remainder of his life, he depended more and more on his wife, and Isabella had a large share in the management of public affairs. "Here you may rest assured," wrote Equicola to Duke Alfonso, "that everything is referred to Madonna, and not a leaf is allowed to stir without her knowledge and consent." But the task was by no means easy, and she had to steer her way through many perilous rocks. On his recovery, Julius II. resumed his former plans with fresh energy, and in October 1511, a Holy League between Spain, Venice, and the Pope was proclaimed in Rome. Towards the end of January 1512, the Spanish and papal forces under Raymond de Cardona, Viceroy of Naples, besieged Bologna, and the Venetians took Brescia. But this town was quickly recovered and cruelly sacked by Louis the Twelfth's nephew, Gaston de Foix, after which this dashing young soldier followed up his success by invading Romagna. On

¹ Luzio in *Giorn. St. d. Lett.*, 1899, pp. 44-46.

Easter Day, the two armies met on the plains near Ravenna, and after a fiercely contested fight, the superiority of Alfonso d'Este's artillery decided the fortunes of the day. The army of the League was completely defeated, and Cardinal Medici, the Pope's legate, two of his generals, Fabrizio Colonna and the Marquis of Pescara, were made prisoners, with all their guns and banners. But the victorious general, Gaston de Foix, fell in the thick of the fight, and there was no one left to take his place. The army was demoralised, and their leaders soon began to quarrel. Alfonso d'Este retired to Ferrara, and the Duke of Urbino, who had refused to move hitherto, now advanced with fresh forces to his uncle's help, and once more received the bâton of command, while, at a summons from the Holy Father, a strong body of Swiss, under Cardinal Schinner, descended on Milan. On the 3rd of May, only three weeks after the disastrous defeat of Ravenna, the Pope, whose indomitable courage never quailed, opened the Lateran Council, and pronounced the Council of Pisa to be null and void. A month later, the Milanese rose in arms, and once more threw off the hated yoke of France. The French generals withdrew their troops beyond the Alps, and Bologna opened its gates to the papal legate. The Pope's triumph was complete, and he ordered solemn processions and thanksgivings throughout the churches for the deliverance of Italy.

Meanwhile, Isabella's precious boy was still living in the Vatican, and, much as she longed to clasp him in her arms, she was too keenly sensible of the importance of keeping the Pope in good humour to urge his return. Since Julius the Second's recovery

from his illness, Federico's ascendancy with the old man had become greater than ever. He accompanied His Holiness to the opening of the Lateran Council, wearing a sword and cuirass over a suit of white satin and gold brocade, embroidered with the Greek letters alpha and omega, which his mother had sent him for the occasion, and a velvet cap with a gold medal of Hercules, by Caradosso. The Pope, Stazio reports, was highly amused at the sight of Federico's warlike array, and flourished his stick at him, calling out: "Are you ready to fight me?" But, after mass had been sung, the young prince escaped from the long orations and tedious ceremonies which followed, and was conducted by Agostino Chigi to dine at the Convent of San Gregorio on the Aventine, and listen to the Aretine's comic recitations. Many were the splendid entertainments which the wealthy merchant gave in Federico's honour, feasting him, as Gadio tells Isabella, with an abundance of delicate viands, the best wines and most excellent melons and fruits in the world, and bringing peasant children from his native Siena to act pastoral plays before him. One day he took him to see his alum quarries at Civita-vecchia, and spend Sunday at a hunting lodge in the forest, where the immense quantities of fish and game with which the table was loaded amazed the honest Mantuan tutor, who could not understand how such luxuries should spring up in these wild and desert places.

On the Feast of St. Sebastian, Federico visited the basilica of S. Paolo fuori le Mura, to obtain certain indulgences attached to a crucifix before which St. Bridget prayed, and which is still preserved in a side-chapel. After dining with the Benedictine Fathers,

he was taken over a ship, manned by galley-slaves in the Tiber, by the Genoese captain of the Pope's galleys. A salute was fired and trumpets blown in honour of his visit, but the sight of the poor galley-slaves filled him and his companions with compassion. "I have never seen galley-slaves before," wrote Grossino to the Marchesa, "but I think few persons would not be grieved to see these poor men chained by the leg and wearing hardly any clothes. They live on bread and water, and their skin is blackened with exposure. Poor fellows! I think they must envy the dead! Their only pastime is to make ropes when they are resting." Yet these unhappy men mingled their shouts of joy with the discharge of the artillery, and Signor Federico, the secretary hastens to add, gave many of them money. Grossino proceeds to relate how he visited the Church of St. Sebastian on his way back, and saw the marble block with the print of our Lord's feet, and how, in spite of a heavy down-pour of rain, all Rome seemed to be there. In the same letter, Grossino describes a visit which he paid, on the Feast of St. Agnes, to the well-known church of that name, two miles without the gates. "This," he writes, "is a most ancient sanctuary, as old as any in Rome, and full of fine antiques." He describes the six carved and finely polished candelabra of white stone, the rich marbles of the long flight of stairs leading up to the church, and the ancient chapel of S. Costanza, containing the porphyry sarcophagus which was, he remarks, once sacred to Bacchus, but now holds the ashes of a saint. This porphyry tomb, adorned, as Grossino tells his mistress, with reliefs of Cupids gathering in the vintage, is now in the Vatican, as well as the six candelabra. but the fourth-century

mosaics of genii picking and pressing the grapes, which he describes as the oldest and some of the finest in Rome, may still be seen on the vaulted roof. The Mantuan secretary ends his letter by giving Isabella a long and minute description of the famous statue of the river-god Tiber, with the wolf suckling Romulus and Remus, which had just been dug up in a house close to the Dominican Convent of Sta. Maria sopra Minerva. The discovery attracted crowds from all parts of Rome, and the marble group was promptly bought by the Pope, and placed in the Belvedere, together with a Sleeping Nymph, generally known as Ariadne, but which Grossino calls a Cleopatra, and which was celebrated as such in an elegant set of Latin hexameters by Castiglione. In an earlier letter, of July 12, 1511, Grossino also mentions the famous Apollo, "a statue," he writes, "held to be no less fine than the Laocoon," which had been discovered some years before on a farm at Grottaferrata, belonging to Pope Julius when he was still Cardinal della Rovere, and was now removed to the Vatican. Another of Grossino's letters gives a curious description of the so-called Feast of the Jews at carnival, when twelve Jews ran a race on foot from the Piazza di S. Pietro to the Castel Sant' Angelo. Messer Rabi, the Pope's Hebrew doctor, presided at this fête, and one hundred armed Jews rode before him, while fifty others marched at his side, bearing olive boughs and banners with the Pope's arms, and those of the city of Rome, S.P.Q.R. The scarlet pallium was presented to the winner by the Senator, amid shouts of *Julio!* and the Jews who took part in the race were entertained at Messer Rabi's house. Federico also attended the bull-baiting and horse

paces on the Piazza di S. Pietro, and a splendid masquerade in the Campo dei Fiori, when Isabella's uncle, the handsome Cardinal of Aragon, and several other Monsignori, appeared on Arab horses in magnificent Hungarian costumes, blazing with gold and silver and jewels, with belts and scimitars, boots and spurs to match.¹

The Marchesa, we may be sure, appreciated these details fully, and was still better pleased to hear how diligently Federico studied Greek and mathematics with Raphael's friend, the learned old humanist, Fabio Calvi of Ravenna, whose frugal habits and devotion to his studies filled his pleasure-loving contemporaries with amazement. Her maternal pride was highly flattered when Filippo Beroaldo composed an ode in honour of Federico, and she wrote back that she hoped this would encourage him to still greater efforts, even though she could hardly believe that he possessed all the excellent gifts which the poet ascribed to him. She now resolved to make use of Federico's influence with the Pope to pave the way for a reconciliation between His Holiness and her brother Alfonso.

The Duke, finding himself abandoned by his French allies, humbly asked leave to come to Rome and obtain absolution from the Pope. He had a powerful friend at the Vatican in the person of Fabrizio Colonna, Elisabetta Gonzaga's brother-in-law, whom he had taken prisoner in the battle of Ravenna, and released without ransom. At his intercession, Julius consented to grant the Duke a safe conduct for his journey, and Alfonso came to Rome in July, accompanied by Isabella's Latin

¹ Luzio, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-34.

teacher, Mario Equicola, and took up his abode in the house of Cardinal Gonzaga, near S. Lorenzo in Lucina. Federico obtained leave to entertain his uncle at a banquet in the Vatican, and afterwards gave a concert in his honour, at which the best singers and musicians in Rome performed. Before dinner, the Duke visited the Borgia apartments, where he greatly admired Pinturicchio's frescoes, and afterwards expressed so much anxiety to see the vault of the chapel which Michel Angelo was painting, that Federico sent to ask Buonarroti, in the Pope's name, if his uncle might ascend the scaffolding. The desired permission was given, and "the Duke," writes Grosino, "went up into the vault with several gentlemen of his suite. One by one they came down again, all but the Duke, who could not satisfy his eyes with gazing at these figures, and remained up there for a long time talking to Michel Angelo, and ended by begging him to paint him a picture, for which he offered a large sum, and the master promised that he would do this. Meanwhile, Signor Federico, seeing that His Excellency remained so long in the vault, took his gentlemen to see the Pope's rooms, and those which Raphael of Urbino is painting, and when the Duke came down he wished to show him the Pope's room, and the *stanze* which Raphael is painting, but His Excellency refused to go there, and his gentlemen told me that he had too much respect for the Pope to enter the room where His Holiness slept."¹

The next day, Fabrizio Colonna introduced the Duke into the Pope's presence, while immense crowds assembled at the Vatican gates, hoping to see the redoubted victor of Ferrara do penance as

¹ Luzio, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

Barbarossa of old at the feet of His Holiness; but the Pope's first greeting was friendly enough. He welcomed Fabrizio as one of the deliverers of Italy, and gave Alfonso absolution in private only, desiring him to visit the four principal churches in Rome, and agreed to appoint a Commission of Cardinals to settle the terms of his reconciliation.¹ Before the Duke left, he asked him to release his unfortunate brothers, Ferrante and Giulio, who had implored the Holy Father to save them from their misery, but could obtain no satisfaction on this point, and Alfonso's uncle, the Cardinal of Aragon, declared that he thought they were dead. But when the terms of the agreement were discussed, it appeared that the Pope, who had already taken possession of Modena and Reggio, demanded the cession of Ferrara itself, and offered the Duke the town of Asti in exchange. When Alfonso indignantly refused to accept these terms, the Pope broke out into one of his most furious passions, and Fabrizio Colonna, fearing for his guest's safety, helped him to leave Rome by night and escape secretly, first to his castle of Marino, and afterwards to Ferrara.² After this, the Pope's anger knew no bounds. He began proceedings against the Duke as a rebellious vassal, threatened Colonna with vengeance, and stormed at every one around him. When Alfonso sent Ariosto to try and appease his wrath, he only raged the more, and bade the poet begone from his sight, or he would order him to be drowned in the Tiber.³ But this time the fiery old

¹ Sanuto, xiv.; Pastor, *op. cit.*; Brosch, *op. cit.*, 352.

² Paride Grassi, *Diarii*, British Museum MSS.; Pastor, *op. cit.*

³ F. Vettori, *Arch. St.*, App., vi. 288; Guicciardini, *Opere Inedite*, vi. 83.

Pontiff had gone too far. Even his allies resented his violence, and King Ferdinand told Guicciardini, the Florentine envoy at the Court of Spain, that he had no intention of allowing the Pope to seize Ferrara and become another Borgia.¹

¹ Guicciardini, *op. inedite*, vi. 88.

CHAPTER XXV

1512—1513

The Congress of Mantua—The Viceroy of Naples, Bishop of Gurk, and Giuliano dei Medici at Mantua—Maximilian Sforza declared Duke of Milan by the allies—Isabella's intrigues in his favour—The Medici restored by Spanish troops—Sack of Prato and return of Giuliano and Giovanni dei Medici to Florence—Congratulations of Isabella—Her intrigues on behalf of Ferrara—The Pope's threats—Cardinal Gurk in Rome—Carnival fêtes and Fra Mariano—Federico's portrait painted by Raphael—Death of Julius II.—Election of Pope Leo X.—Bibbiena becomes a Cardinal.

EARLY in the month of August 1512, the representatives of the allied powers met at Mantua, where a prolonged conference took place, and Isabella d'Este displayed her usual tact and ability in the conduct of negotiations. On this occasion, her friend the Bishop of Gurk again represented the Emperor, and Raimondo de Cardona, Viceroy of Naples, visited Mantua for the first time as King Ferdinand's deputy. Giuliano dei Medici and his clever secretary, Bernardo da Bibbiena, were the agents accredited by the Pope, while Giovanni Soderini, the brother of the Gonfaloniere, was the nominal representative of Florence, but soon found that he possessed little authority. The Pope was determined to punish the Republic for her adhesion to France, and the restoration of the Medici had already been secretly agreed upon, but the great question which occupied the envoys was

the settlement of Milan. Both Maximilian and Ferdinand would have liked to bestow the Duchy on their young grandson, Charles, but neither the Pope nor Venice and Mantua would agree to this, and the Swiss, who held Milan, and were the real masters of the situation, declared at once in favour of Maximilian Sforza, the Moro's elder son. Since the first conquest of Milan by the French in 1499, this youth had been brought up at Innsbrück, with his brother Francesco, in the care of his cousin, the Empress Bianca, and was more of a German than an Italian in his habits and tastes. He was now nineteen, and showed little signs of his father's talent or his mother's high spirit; but Isabella could not forget that he was her nephew, and not only rejoiced that Beatrice's son should reign on his father's throne, but saw in his accession a new opportunity for the advancement of her family's interests. She threw herself heart and soul into the young prince's cause, and lost no opportunity of urging his claims on Lang and Cardona, as well as on Giuliano dei Medici and Bibbiena, who were already her sworn friends and allies. The Viceroy soon fell a prey to the charms of the brilliant Marchesa and her lovely maids-of-honour. The intervals of business were filled with music and song, with pleasant society and gay jests, and while Giuliano and the handsome Bernardo declared themselves to be in love with fair Alda Boiarda, Cardona and the Bishop were at the feet of the fascinating beauty Brognina. Isabella herself had a happy knack of discussing grave political questions at these lively little dances and suppers, and she knew, above all, how to govern others without ever allowing her influence to appear. In this case, the choice of Maximilian Sforza agreed

particularly well with the interests of the confederates, as one of the most clear-sighted Florentine statesmen of the day remarked: "The Pope wished to have a weak Duke of Milan, so as to dispose of the wealthy benefices in the Duchy at his will. The Bishop of Gurk only cared to raise as much money as possible for his imperial master. The Viceroy wished to quarter his Spanish troops in Lombardy and receive pay for them. The Swiss counted on getting their hire from the Duke, and remaining the real masters of Milan; and Venice looked forward to an easy triumph over a feeble prince."¹ So the business of the conference was speedily despatched in a manner agreeable to all parties, saving the unfortunate Florentine envoy, whose opinion was seldom asked. When he left Mantua, the doom of Florence was already sealed.

On the 21st of August, the Spanish army entered Tuscany with the Medici brothers, and when the Gonfaloniere sent troops to oppose their advance, Prato was stormed and cruelly sacked. On the 31st, Giuliano sent the Marchesa the following note² in Bibbiena's writing: "I know well that Your Excellency will rejoice in my happiness, and therefore hasten to tell you that to-morrow my most reverend brother and I are about to return to our home, and take possession of our own house, with the consent of the whole city of Florence. An infinite number of citizens have come here to congratulate us on our good fortune. The good news will, I know, give Your Excellency and her illustrious lord the greatest pleasure, so I send a courier to tell

¹ Francesco Vettori, *Storia d'Italia*, 1511-1527, in *Arch. St. It.*, vi.

² Pastor, "Hist. of the Popes," vi, 654.

you this, and to remind you that I shall be as entirely at your service, when I am back in my home, as I have been during my long exile. I commend myself to my dear Madonna Alda and Equicola, and all your noble court, and so does the Moccicone, who is your faithful servant.—Your servant, GIULIANO DEI MEDICI.” Prato, 31st August, 9 P.M.

The next day the two brothers entered Florence in state, and Isabella sent Giuliano her warmest congratulations. “I thank Your Signory,” she writes, “for this happy news, and assure you that nothing could give me greater pleasure. I rejoice to think that your return to your own house should be accomplished without any tumult, and with the consent of the Republic, and hold this for a good augury of your future peace and prosperity. I feel sure that your return will excite the less opposition, and will be the more grateful to all, since it has been so fortunately effected without any bloodshed. And tell Moccicone how much we all rejoice with him, in this the greatest joy that he has ever had.”¹

So Isabella wrote, in unconscious irony, ignorant of the horrible cruelties of the Spanish soldiers, and of the thousands of innocent women and children who had fallen victims to their greed and lust. She was not without her own anxieties at the time, and, in a letter to Cardinal d’Este,² she tells him of a stormy interview that had taken place between the Pope and the Mantuan envoy, in which His Holiness complained bitterly of the Marquis saying that, owing to him, the Diet had been held at

¹ Luzio e Renier, *Mantova e Urbino*, p. 222.

² Guasti, *Sacco di Prato*.

Mantua instead of in Rome, to the shame and dishonour of the Church, and that now Gurk refused to appear before him. "He accuses us," continues Isabella, "of giving shelter to the Ferrarese, and swears that if you and the Duchess and her children come to Mantua, he will order his army to march against this state instead of Ferrara, regardless of the Emperor's wishes, and will send Federico to the Torresella of Venice, together with many bad words."¹

The old Pope's anger would have been still more fierce if he could have seen the letters and messages which Isabella sent repeatedly to her son-in-law of Urbino, begging him, for her sake, to spare Ferrara, and do as little injury as possible to her brother's subjects. Castiglione, who was at Urbino, and who had, as Isabella told her brothers, more influence with the Duke than any one else, sent her consoling assurances, and while the Marquis wrote grovelling letters to the Pope, promising to send him the first of the Este traitors who dared set foot on his territory, Francesco Maria wasted so much time over his preparations that it became necessary to suspend military operations until the spring. Meanwhile Parma and Piacenza were given up to the Church, and sent delegates with splendid presents to Rome. Finally, on the 4th of November, the Bishop of Gurk himself arrived at the Vatican, and publicly announced the Emperor's adhesion to the Lateran Council. The Pope, overjoyed at this triumph, welcomed Maximilian's ambassador with royal honours, and raised him to the dignity of Cardinal. On the 25th of November, the new alliance between

¹ Luzio e Renier, *Mantova e Urbino*, p. 205.

the Emperor and the Pope was solemnly proclaimed in S. Maria del Popolo, and Federico rode at the Pope's side, "looking," wrote Stazio Gadio, "as beautiful as an angel," in a suit of gold and peacock satin, with a white velvet cap and fine white feathers, given him by his mother, fastened by a diamond clasp, with the letters A.C.R.V., "which His Holiness thus interprets, '*Amòr caro ritorna vivo*' — 'Dear love, come home safe.'"¹

The following Christmas and carnival were celebrated with greater gaiety than had been known for many years in Rome. The banquets and suppers to which Federico was invited at the house of his uncle, Sigismondo Gonzaga, and of the other Cardinals, were marked by a wild revelry and an absence of decorum which his mother would hardly have approved, and Stazio felt it necessary to suppress certain incidents in his letters to the Marchesa. He does not, for instance, mention the presence of the Roman courtesan Albina at Cardinal Gonzaga's house, one night when Fra Mariano jumped on the table, and, gallantly assisted by Bibbiena, threw chickens at each other, and smeared the guests' faces with soup and sauce from the dishes on the table.² This Fra Mariano Fetti, whose presence was so much in request among the members of the Sacred College, and in whose company, Stazio writes, it was impossible not to be merry, afterwards became the favourite buffoon of Leo X., and held the lucrative post of *Piombatore*, or Keeper of the Papal Seals, for many years. He professed great devotion to the Marquis of Mantua, who repeatedly presented

¹ Luzio, *Federico*, p. 40.

² *Ibid.*, p. 47.

the pallium which his horses won on the Corso to the friar's convent of S. Silvestro, and his witty letters abound in affectionate messages to the Marchesa and the *caro Marchesino*. In the midst of these carnival festivities, he and Bibbiena were summoned by their patron, Cardinal Medici, to Florence, and from the convent of San Marco, in that city, the Frate addressed a long letter to the Marquis, in which, after condoling with him on his long illness, and praising the charms of his sweet little son, whose young face has refreshed and renewed the life of the old city of Rome, he tells him that he, the poor friar, has only two wishes left in the world. One is to visit the sanctuary of S. Maria di Loreto; the other to come to Mantua, to see his dear lord and the famous *palazzina* which contains the Triumphs of Petrarch (?) by Andrea Mantegna, the glory of Mantua. If it were not for the horrors of wind, snow and rain, of mud and marshes, he would fly thither at once and taste of the good fish of Garda; but once let the spring come, and he will set out without delay to spend a joyous week in the company of his lord, for whose health all good Dominicans never cease to pray.¹

But the most splendid pageant held in Rome during the carnival of 1513 was a procession representing the Triumph of Pope Julius II., which started from the Capitol and passed down the Corso to the bridge of Sant' Angelo and along the Via de' Pontefici to the Agone. In this strange masquerade the victory of the Pope over the French, the deliverance of captive Italy, and the sittings of the Lateran Council, were all set forth; and the

¹ Luzio, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

different cities were represented by symbolic figures and groups, with the usual abundance of scriptural and classical allusions—Moses lifting up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, Phaeton falling from Heaven, and the sun-god Apollo, throned in his temple of Delphi, triumphing over all his foes. But while the long procession, which Isabella's correspondents describe minutely in their letters, was winding through the crowded streets, amid the acclamations of all Rome, the Pope himself was dying in the Vatican, and not all the science of the learned Jewish physician could bring back the breath of life into the old man's worn-out frame. On the 18th of February, Stazio Gadio wrote to tell the Marquis that the Pope was suffering from a sudden attack of fever, and that the worst was feared. The Cardinals had placed guards at the gates of the Vatican, and some of the captains had asked Federico to take the command of the papal troops. On all sides people were removing their property for fear of a tumult, and Signor Federico himself was doubtful whether to remain or not, but would follow his uncle Cardinal Gonzaga's directions. Perfect order was maintained, however, and Federico remained quietly in his rooms.

A year before this, on the 24th of May 1512, Isabella d'Este had written to desire that her son's portrait should be painted by Raphael. "Since we have been obliged," she writes to Ippoliti, "to give away the portrait of our son Federico, which was painted at Bologna, we wish to have another, especially as we hear he is still handsomer and more graceful than he was then. We desire you to see if the painter Raphael, the son of Giovanni Santi of

Urbino, is now in Rome. If he is, ask him to paint a bust of Federico in armour, but if Raphael should not be there, find out who is the best master next to him, since we do not wish to have him painted by an inferior artist, but desire that his portrait should be taken by some good master, whom we will treat with our usual honourable courtesy. And tell him that we should like the portrait to be life-size and painted as soon as possible, since there is nothing that we wish for more."

A whole year passed, however, before Raphael was able to undertake the commission. At length, on the 13th of January 1513, he invited the young prince to give him his first sitting. "Yesterday," wrote Stazio Gadio to the Marchesa, "Federico armed himself with Your Excellency's doublet, put on his plumed hat and gold cape, and went to have his portrait painted by Maestro Raphael of Urbino, painter to His Holiness, who took a sketch of him in charcoal in this dress, which he will paint afterwards."

"M. Raphael of Urbino," adds Grossino, "has begun to paint Signor Federico in the costume which he wore at the opening of the Council, armed with the doublet and wearing the hat which Your Excellency sent him."

A month later, on the 15th of February, Grossino wrote again: "As for S. Federico's portrait, I ask M. Raphael constantly how it is progressing; he tells me that he is working at it, and that I need have no fear, since he is very anxious to paint this portrait and serve Your Excellency well." But four days after this, Grossino wrote: "M. Raphael of Urbino has returned the cape and doublet of

S. Federico, in which he was to paint his portrait, and begs Your Excellency to pardon him, since, at the present time, it is impossible for him to give his mind to the work."

His great patron's life was fast ebbing away, and that very night of the 20th of February the Pope breathed his last. The heroic nature of the man was never more evident than on his death-bed. Cardinal Gonzaga, in a letter which he wrote to Mantua that evening, owns that he and all his brother Cardinals were moved to tears when the dying Pope bade them farewell, and calmly gave them his last blessing. He asked them to pray for his soul, saying that he had been a great sinner, and had not governed the Church well. And with perfect composure he gave directions for the coming Conclave, and begged them to observe his laws against simony and keep their hands pure. "After we had kissed his hand and received his last blessing, he took leave of us with the utmost fortitude, but not without many tears on our part. I confess I could not help weeping when I remembered all the benefits which Your Excellency and all our house, but I above all, have received from him. And I was moved to tears even more by the sight of this strong and constant soul, which the near approach of death could not shake, turning to God our Saviour, and with true greatness of heart remembering all those things which most people forget in their last hours. His Holiness sees, hears, understands, speaks, orders, and provides, as if he were in full strength and health, and is perfectly calm and self-possessed, although he is actually dying."¹ A few

¹ Luzio, *Federico*, p. 51.

hours later, Federico himself wrote the following brief note to his father: "During the past night, at the hour of half-past four on Monday morning, His Holiness Pope Julius II. passed from this world into the next, called by our Lord God to life eternal."¹

Great was the lamentation when the news of the Pope's death was made known. "Rome felt," writes Gregorovius, "that a kingly soul had passed away." And Paride Grassi, who had lived forty years in Rome, says that he never saw such crowds at a Pope's funeral before, or such tokens of genuine and widespread grief. "They thronged to kiss his feet and gaze on his dead face, for all recognised in him a true Roman Pontiff and Vicar of Christ, a defender and protector of the weak against tyrants, and the deliverer of Italy from the barbarians."²

Only in Ferrara was the news of Julius the Second's death hailed with satisfaction. Alfonso d'Este was delivered from his most dangerous enemy, and Isabella must have been secretly conscious of a deep sense of relief. Now, at least, Federico would be set free, and could return to her arms at once. As soon as the Conclave met he obtained permission from the Sacred College to go to Mantua, and on the 3rd of March took leave of the Cardinals. "The door was not quite closed," writes honest Grossino to his mistress, "so I could see through the opening how His Highness bowed to the ground and tried to kiss their hands, but they all embraced and kissed him."³

¹ D'Arco, *Arch. St. It.*, App. ii. 284.

² Gregorovius, *Rom*, viii. 113; Creighton, v. 189.

³ Luzio, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

A week afterwards, Cardinal Medici was proclaimed Pope, and his secretary, Bibbiena, wrote joyfully to inform the Marchesa Isabella of his patron's election, and to assure her of Leo the Tenth's absolute devotion to her person and interests.

"Your Signory will have already heard this most happy news of the accession of your most reverend *compatrie* to the pontificate, which will, I know, give you immense joy and consolation, because, putting aside the singular love which His Holiness and all his house have ever borne to your illustrious consort and yourself, you will understand that the safety of your nephew and his state, as well as that of your brother, depends on the elevation of your *compatrie* to the Holy See. So that Your Excellency has greater cause to rejoice over this most fortunate event than any other person in the world, and so I too rejoice with Your Highness and congratulate you warmly. His Holiness wished your illustrious first-born son, Signor Federico, had been still in Rome, when he came out of the Conclave, so as to show him some sign of that true and great affection for Your Excellency and the Marquis, of which the Holy Father has already spoken repeatedly, and I tell you this that you may know His Holiness has your interests ever at his heart, and loves you well." And after many protestations of his own devotion and anxiety to serve her, especially now that, as he modestly puts it, "he may be of a little more account than he was before," Bibbiena ends by sending his affectionate greetings to Madonna Laura (Giovanni Gonzaga's wife), his dear Madonna Alda, and all the Marchesana's ladies,

above all Isabella Lavagnolo, and her tutor, Mario Equicola.¹

The Marchesa was at Milan when the news of Leo's election reached her, and sent Equicola at once to kiss the new Pope's feet and offer him her congratulations. On the 28th of March, she replied to Bibbiena in the following letter: "You will have already heard from Mario Equicola of the joy and delight with which this happy event has filled us, and really, since the day of our birth, we have never had any greater pleasure than this good news, which reached us immediately after we heard of the death of Pope Julius. For all of which we praise and thank our Lord God, hoping that, by the great goodness and wisdom of His Holiness, we may see the safety of the Duke our brother's state secured, that of our nephew the Duke of Milan established, as well as the honour and exaltation of our husband the Marquis and the peace of all Italy confirmed. On our own account we are satisfied that we shall enjoy the protection and perpetual favour of His Holiness, both because of the bond of our common sponsorship and of the love and regard we bore him as Cardinal dei Medici, not to speak of our intimate friendship with his brother, the Magnifico Giuliano. No less do we reckon on the favour and influence which you will retain with His Holiness, feeling no doubt that neither rank nor honours will change your nature, but that you will be as kind and affectionate to us as ever, even although we have made you lose 500 ducats!"² After this allusion to some wager between them regarding the result of the Conclave, she ends

¹ Luzio e Renier, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

² *Ibid.*, p. 211.

by congratulating Bibbiena on the new dignities of protonotary and treasurer which the Pope had bestowed upon him. Equicola, in his letters from Rome, informed his mistress that his friend Bibbiena stood foremost in the Pope's favour, and was already beset with needy pensioners seeking his good offices, but told the Marchesa that he was as gay and kindly as ever, and quite unspoilt by his sudden elevation. But there are so many Florentines at court, he adds, that it is impossible to count them. The whole Vatican—indeed, one may say the whole of Rome—has become Florentine! The Pope, who had not forgotten the kind welcome which he had found at Mantua a year before, when he escaped from the French camp, after being made prisoner in the battle of Ravenna, received Isabella's envoy most graciously, and spoke in the warmest terms of the Marchesa, saying that he looked upon her as a dear sister, only that she inspired him with more profound reverence.

Bibbiena, who was only thirty-three years of age, now took deacon's orders with a view to his future elevation, and, as his friends expected, was created a Cardinal in the following autumn. The Marchesa was one of the first to whom he announced his new dignity, and, in a graceful note bearing the date of the 18th of October, he thanked her for her kind congratulations. "Your Highness," he wrote, "will not, I hope, think that I am so vulgar as to think myself of more importance than I was before, least of all with regard to you; for, even if this rank brings me greater respect from others—which, indeed, I have not as yet discovered!—this can only affect those who are strangers to me, certainly not Your Excellency, whose Moccicone I will remain to the end.

As for that part of your sweet and charming letter in which you say that the prayers I offer in this habit must avail more, I gladly agree, and hope that the friends who are nearest to me may receive more than others. All the same, it is devil's work to ask favours for others, even for those whom you most wish to help! but I will try to obey Your Highness, and ask boldly."¹

All Rome rejoiced at the peaceful opening of the new pontificate. "Once Venus reigned, then Mars, now Pallas holds her sway," was the motto which Agostino Chigi placed on the triumphal arch which he raised in honour of the Pope's coronation. And while the Duke of Urbino, clad in deep mourning for his uncle, held the Pope's bridle as Prefect of Rome and Captain-General of the Church, the Duke of Ferrara, absolved from papal censures, and sumptuously attired in white and gold brocade, was one of the most splendid figures in the ranks of the stately procession that passed from St. Peter's to the Lateran.² No one rejoiced more sincerely over his restoration to the Holy Father's favour than his sister Isabella, and, as she told her friend, the new Cardinal, she only longed for the day when she should be able to come to Rome herself and kiss the Pope's feet.

¹ Luzio, *Federico*, p. 13.

² Gregorovius, *Rom*, viii. 167; Roscoe, *Leo X.* App.

CHAPTER XXVI

1512—1513

Isabella spends the carnival at Milan—Duke Maximilian Sforza—His weakness and extravagance—The Viceroy of Naples and Cardinal Gurk at Milan—Isabella and her ladies—Her letter to the Marquis in self-defence—Brognina and Alda Boiarda dismissed from her service—Tebaldeo attacks Mario Equicola and Isabella—Indignation of the Marchesa—Her letter to Cardinal d'Este—Duchess Elisabetta's reply.

WHILE Julius the Second's life was slowly drawing to its close, and Federico Gonzaga was sharing the orgies of Cardinals and monkish buffoons in Rome, his mother was spending a gay carnival at the court of her nephew, Maximilian, Duke of Milan. The Pope lost no time in inviting the young prince to take possession of his father's duchy, and, early in the autumn, Maximilian crossed the Alps and came to Lombardy. But his formal restoration was deferred until after the Bishop of Gurk's visit to Rome. In November he paid a visit to Mantua, where the Marchesa welcomed him with the greatest affection, and a series of brilliant fêtes were held in his honour. From the first moment of their meeting, Beatrice's son seems to have become genuinely attached to his aunt, and she on her part exerted herself to rouse the weak and indolent youth to a sense of his high position and great opportunities. But Maximilian's education had been sadly neglected, and the poverty and dreariness of his long

years of exile had produced a bad effect upon his character. He had grown up eccentric and suspicious, and was rarely seen to smile saving at the tricks of dwarfs and clowns, for whom he showed a childish passion. When he visited Mantua the follies of a certain dwarf belonging to the Marchesa, and known by the name of *Nanino*, pleased him better than anything else; and Lorenzo Strozzi, who had lately arrived from Rome, wrote long accounts to Federico of the freaks and escapades of this favourite buffoon. One day Nanino came to meet the Duke in episcopal vestments, with the most solemn air in the world; the next he appeared in the robes of a Venetian patrician, while his hunting exploits and hand-to-hand fight with a goat afforded the Duke unbounded amusement.¹

A month later Cardinal Gurk and the Viceroy of Naples, Raimondo de Cardona, and Cardinal Schinner, the leader of the Swiss forces, all came to Milan, and took part in the Duke's state entry on the 20th of December.² The Marchesa had promised her nephew to honour the New Year festivities with her presence, and gladly embraced this opportunity of pleading her brother Alfonso's cause with the Spanish and Imperial ministers. One winter evening in January, she entered Milan by torchlight, accompanied by a brilliant train of courtiers and ladies. Among them were Delia, who was for many years the object of the young Marchese di Pescara's passionate devotion; Alda Boiarda, whose name is so often mentioned in Bembo and Bibbiena's letters; and the still more fascinating Brognina, who had already won

¹ Luzio, *Buffoni*, *Nuova Antologia*, 1891.

² Prato, *Cronaca Arch. St. It.*, iii. 309.

the hearts of Gurk and Cardona at Mantua in the previous summer. A succession of banquets, jousts, comedies, and balls followed, and the gaiety of these entertainments was in no way diminished by the shells that were discharged at intervals by the guns of the French garrison which still held the Castello. "Happily, the French guns had the courtesy to cease when the tilting began!" wrote Isabella in a letter to her husband, in which she describes a tournament held in front of the Corte Vecchia, that old Sforza palace near the Duomo. But on the second day of the jousts, when the Marchese di Pescara distinguished himself by his valour, and the Duke and Marchesa were again present, a sudden bombardment from the Castello sent every one flying!¹ In another letter Isabella describes a sumptuous banquet and dramatic representation given by the Brescian Count Brunoro, brother of Veronica Gambara, on the 25th of January. The victory of the League and expulsion of the French were celebrated in a series of *tableaux* and musical recitations, and a stately oak—the emblem of the Della Rovere family—with an eagle's nest in its topmost boughs, occupied the centre of the stage. But the play itself was poor and very inferior, as Isabella told her husband, to those performed at Mantua. "I am certain," she wrote, "that any one who has seen Your Excellency's comedies and fine stage scenery must feel more *ennui* than pleasure at the sight of such representations as these."² On this occasion the Cardinal and Viceroy openly competed for the fair maid of honour's favours. Both of them endeavoured to kiss Brognina as she entered the

¹ Prato, *op. cit.*, 310.

² D'Ancona, *Teatro It.*, vol. ii.

house, and Monsignore of Gurk, Isabella tells her husband, so far forgot his dignity and office as to go down on his knees before her. Another evening, when Isabella invited the Duke and his illustrious guests to a masked ball at her house, the Cardinal danced twice with Brognina, and spent most of his time in amorous discourse with her. That lady, however, made no secret of her preference for the Spanish Viceroy, who soon became her recognised lover and sent a rich present of black and crimson velvet in acknowledgment of her favours. Isabella meanwhile made use of this opportunity to gain the ear of the Emperor's favourite, and when, after supper, the guests took off their masks, she had a long talk with Cardinal Gurk on the subject of Peschiera, a fortified town on the Lake of Garda, which had formerly belonged to Mantua, and which the Gonzagas were exceedingly anxious to recover.¹ Little faith, however, she owns, was to be placed in Monsignore's promises; but her efforts on behalf of her brothers proved more successful, and she was able to recover some letters written by Cardinal Ippolito, betraying his strong French sympathies, which had unluckily fallen into the hands of the papal legate. In these delicate matters Isabella had a skilful assistant in Francesco Chiericati, a clever Vicentine humanist, who was secretary to Cardinal Schinner, and afterwards rose to high favour under Leo X. and his successors. Chiericati was attached to the Gonzagas, who had shown his family much kindness, and he informed the Marchesa before her arrival of the existence of some of these letters. "After consulting Madonna Ippolita

¹ Luzio, *Arch. St. Lomb.*, 1901, p. 162.

Sforza," he wrote to Isabella on the 29th of November, "I burnt them all, feeling sure you would not wish them to be preserved." Isabella never forgot Chiericati's service on this occasion, and always honoured him with her friendship and regard.¹

The Marchesa's own letters from Milan give many curious instances of the jealousy with which the Italians regarded the Spaniards, who were ready to draw their swords at the least provocation, while their greed and rapacity soon became proverbial. At one ball given by the Duke in the Corte Vecchia, not only were the gold buttons of his courtiers secretly cut off, but Isabella herself, whose gown was adorned with her favourite device of small gold candelabra, lost several of these ornaments in the course of the same evening.²

Political considerations, as well as her nephew's pressing entreaties, induced Isabella to prolong her visit until the beginning of March. But when the news of the Pope's death reached her, and she heard that her darling Federico was about to return, she set out at once for Mantua. Unfortunately, reports of the scandal excited by the Viceroy's amours with the Marchesa's maid of honour had reached her husband's ears, and before she left Milan Isabella received an angry letter from the Marquis, reproaching her for her prolonged absence, and telling her that the disgraceful conduct of her ladies had made her the common talk of the town. The frank and noble letter in which Isabella replied to these accusations has lately been discovered by Signor Luzio in the Gonzaga archives,³ and deserves to be given in full :—

¹ B. Morsolin, *F. Chiericati*, p. 124.

² Luzio, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

“My dear Lord,—I am sorry but hardly surprised to hear that you were not satisfied with my explanations, and I should be more so, if I felt this to be my fault, as it certainly is my misfortune. But, since the reason why I did not obey Your Excellency at once was that, with your own permission, I wished to help my brother and please my nephew, it seems to me that you need not express so much dissatisfaction, and I can only lament the unlucky fate which always renders my actions displeasing to you. And I certainly do not believe that I have done anything on this Milanese journey, for which I deserve to become ‘the common talk of the town.’ I know that I have acquired many new friends on your behalf, as well as on my own, and that I have behaved as I ought to do, and as I am always accustomed to behave, for, thanks to the grace of my God and myself, I never needed either to be controlled by others, or to be reminded how to govern my actions. And, although in other things I count for nothing, God has granted me this grace, for which Your Excellency owes me as much gratitude as ever any husband owed his wife, and even if you loved and honoured me as much as possible you could never repay my faithfulness. This makes you sometimes to say that I am proud, because, knowing how much I deserve of you and how little I receive, I am tempted at times to alter my nature and to appear different from what I am. But even if you should always treat me badly, I would never cease to do what is right, and the less love you show me, the more I shall always love you, because, in truth, this love is part of myself, and I became your wife so young that I can never remember having been without it. This being the case, I think that,

without incurring your displeasure, I might be at liberty to put off my return a fortnight, for the reasons which I have already explained. Do not be angry with me, and say that you do not believe I wish to see you, as I have said in my letters, for if my desire in this respect were satisfied, you would let me see you much more often than I do in Mantua. I commend myself once more to Your Excellency, and beg your pardon for writing so long a letter. From one who loves you as well as herself.—ISABELLA, MARCHESA DI MANTOVA." In Piacenza, the 12th day of March, 1513.

This letter not only reveals the innate nobleness and loyalty of Isabella's nature, and confirms our estimate of her fine character, but also throws light on the painful circumstances of her private life during the long and trying years of her husband's illness. The unhappy man, suffering as he was from incurable disease, and condemned to a life of enforced idleness, sank into a querulous and fretful invalid, who quarrelled with his servants and friends, worried his wife incessantly over trifles, and complained bitterly whenever she was absent. The patience with which Isabella bore his caprices, the faithfulness with which she carried out his wishes, and her affectionate solicitude for his health and anxious endeavours to amuse and distract him, are evident from the almost daily letters which she addressed to him during her journeys. On this occasion, it must be admitted, the behaviour of Brognina had given just cause for scandal; and although at Milan the Marchesa might think it prudent to shut her eyes to her maid of honour's flirtations with personages as exalted as Raimondo de Cardona and Cardinal Gurk, she herself felt that it was no

longer possible to keep the girl in her service. Accordingly, Brognina retired to a convent near Goïto, where she lived as the recognised mistress of the Viceroy.¹ But the effects of the Marquis Francesco's displeasure did not end here. A few months later, he dismissed the Marchesa's favourite maid of honour, Alda Boiarda, the cousin of the Ferrara poet, Matteo Boiardo, who had lived for ten years in her service, and was as much beloved by Duchess Elisabetta and Emilia Pia as by Giuliano dei Medici and Bibbiena. This time, Isabella was deeply distressed, and she interceded in vain for this devoted servant, who had been her companion on so many journeys, and remained her friend to the end. But the Marquis sternly refused to listen to her entreaties, declaring in a letter which he wrote to Isabella that Alda had lighted a flame of discord in his household which would not be extinguished in his lifetime, and saying that no person so universally hated had ever left his court.² The Marchesa, on her part, did not forget her friend, and wrote sadly to Alda's sister regretting that she had been compelled to part from her, and had been unable to do more for so dear and faithful a companion.

The troubles among Isabella's ladies were followed by a violent quarrel between two of her favourite men of letters, the poet Tebaldeo and Mario Equicola, her tutor. Mario's name, as we have seen, was frequently linked, more in jest than earnest, with that of Isabella Lavagnola, the sister of the Marchesa's old dancing-master, and one of her most trusted attendants. Many are the allusions to Isabella's charms and to

¹ Luzio in *Arch. St. Lomb.*, 1901.

² Luzio e Renier, *Giorn. St. d. Lett. It.*, 1900.

Mario's supposed devotion for her in Bibbiena's letters, and the Cardinal himself often declared that he belonged to the number of her most ardent admirers. But her conduct and character seem to have been as blameless as the Marchesa's own, and even Francesco Gonzaga was furious when, on All Saints' Day, 1513, a copy of scurrilous verses directed against Equicola and Isabella was found nailed up on the walls in different parts of Mantua. A strict inquiry was at once instituted, and the deed was traced back to Isabella's treasurer, Giulio Oldoino, who confessed that the verses had been composed and sent to him by Tebaldeo. The poet had left Mantua some time ago, and was already suspected of being the author of a similar lampoon which had appeared in Rome. Oldoino excused himself for his share in this unworthy act by saying that Mario was his enemy, and had slandered him, and that he did not think the verses could do the Marchesa or Isabella any real injury. He was promptly dismissed for his pains, and that although he had spent sixteen years in the Marchesa's service, while Francesco Gonzaga addressed a furious reprimand to the poet Tebaldeo, reproaching him with the vilest ingratitude and threatening terrible vengeance. Isabella, on her part, wrote long letters to Rome and Urbino, giving full accounts of the transaction, and begging all her friends to withdraw their favour from the poet who had stooped to such baseness.

The letter which she addressed to her brother, Cardinal d'Este, who had returned to Rome, and stood high in the new Pope's favour, is very characteristic of her impetuous and affectionate nature, and shows how keenly she resented this insult to her innocent servant :—

“Most Reverend and dear Brother,—I believe Your Reverend Highness heard that some time ago a letter written by my tutor, Equicola, was surreptitiously stolen and printed with some additional lines scoffing at Mario and my attendant, Isabella. I am sure that you and every gentle lord and lady will have severely blamed the writer of these verses, which, I confess, excited my serious displeasure, not on account of Mario, who is well able to defend himself, but because I objected that a member of my household should be spoken of with so little respect. I was still more amazed to see that I was accused by the writer of having pronounced Mario’s writings superior to those of any living scholar. But since I could not discover the author of this calumny, in spite of certain suspicions which crossed my mind from the first, I resolved to bide my time, feeling certain that time would reveal the name of the guilty man, and that he would soon be found out and punished, as has indeed happened, because on the Feast of All Saints, certain sonnets, containing still more abusive slanders of Mario and Isabella, were found fastened up on the wall in many places of the town. One of these libels I now enclose for Your Reverence to see. After this, I could no longer submit to such indignity, and made a strict inquiry, from which I discovered that the verses had been sent from Bologna by that fine gentleman Tebaldeo to my treasurer, Giulio Oldoino, who could not deny the charge, and confessed that he had ordered them to be put up in public places, and excused himself by saying that Mario was his enemy, and that he did not think the mention of Isabella would hurt either her or me. I gave Giulio no other

punishment than that of instant dismissal from my service, where he has lived honourably for the last sixteen years, although he really deserved to be treated with greater severity, since Isabella had never done him any wrong, and he must have known how much the verses would displease me. As for Tebaldeo, all I desire is that you and all these lords and ladies should know how ungratefully he has behaved to my lord and myself, after being entertained and rewarded by us during many years past, and that without holding any office at this court or doing us any service. If Tebaldeo himself left your service because he was so much affronted at seeing one of his boys in your house punished, what, must he think, are my feelings at seeing one of my most faithful maidens publicly held up to ridicule by him? Truly, his has been a fine and noble invention, worthy of eternal fame! If Mario's commentary on his works excited his envy, he might have chosen some better way of answering and confuting him than by slandered the honour of a maiden, out of hatred for one who looks on love rather as a theme for verse than a personal emotion, as I know Your Highness and all the world are aware. . . . I beg you to communicate this fine trick of Tebaldeo's invention to the Cardinals of Aragon [her uncle], of S. Maria in Portico [Bibbiena], and the Magnifico Giuliano, who will be no less wroth than I am for the sake of his dear Margherita, who is Isabella's sister. And because Giulio, in his examination, confessed that other scurrilous verses of the same kind were about to be published, I beg Your Highness to inform Tebaldeo that, if he does not abstain from such actions, he will soon feel the result of offending a

sister of Your Excellency and of the Duke of Ferrara, as well as the wife of the Marquis of Mantua.”¹ Nov. 4, 1513.

Cardinal d’Este, who was one of Tebaldeo’s chief patrons, does not seem to have taken the matter very seriously, and the poet’s indiscretion did not prevent him from enjoying the favour of Pope Leo X. and the friendship of Raphael and Castiglione, of Bembo and Bibbiena during many years to come. There were others besides Tebaldeo who looked on Mario as a tiresome pedant, and the poet’s sally probably provoked more laughter than wrath among the Marchesa’s friends in Rome. Even the gentle Duchess Elisabetta seems to have considered Isabella’s anger somewhat excessive, and used her gentle influence to soothe her sister-in-law’s excited feelings. After condoling with the Marchesa on her natural annoyance, and saying that no blame could possibly attach to Mario or to Isabella, of whom she was particularly fond, she went on: “I feel all your sorrows, you know, as if they were my own, but really, in this case, the chief cause for regret seems to be the loss of so old and trusted a servant as Giulio. Mario’s talents are too well known for envy to do him any harm, while Isabella’s goodness is manifest to all, and this attack cannot sully her innocence. But who is there among us whose conduct is so perfect as to close the mouth of slanderers? Their usual habit, I have often noticed, is to attack those who are the most praiseworthy and estimable. So I beg Your Excellency to trouble yourself no more on the subject, but to allow the wrong to recoil on the heads of

¹ V. Cian in *Giorn. St. d. Lett. It.*, viii.

those who invent these slanders, and who, in my judgment, are sufficiently punished by seeing how hateful they become in the eyes of all virtuous and honest persons. I will only thank you once more for your loving words to me on this matter.”¹

¹ V. Cian in *Giorn. St. d. Lett. It.*, viii.

CHAPTER XXVII

1513—1514

Invasion of Lombardy by the French—Their defeat by the Swiss at Novara—Isabella's journey to Milan stopped by the illness of the Marquis—Papal intrigues against Ferrara—Visit of Rainondo de Cardona to Mantua—Journey of Isabella to the Lago di Garda—Her letters from Lonato, Sermione, and Salò—Trissino presents his "Ritratti" to her—Portrait of the Marchesa introduced—Visit of Isabella to Milan and Pavia.

THE insecure nature of the young Duke of Milan's throne was soon shown. Hardly were the festivities in honour of his accession ended than Milan was attacked by a French army under La Trémouille and Trivulzio, and only saved by the timely arrival of a Swiss force, which defeated the invaders with great loss at Novara. The French beat a hurried retreat across the Alps, the Castello surrendered, and Maximilian Sforza was once more restored to power. But his weakness and incapacity, as well as the heavy taxes which he extorted from his unfortunate subjects, in order to pay the annual tribute demanded by his Swiss supporters, and gratify his own extravagant tastes, rendered his rule more and more unpopular. He began to look with unfounded suspicion on his younger brother Francesco, Duke of Bari, whose popularity with the Milanese had from the first excited his jealousy, and took every opportunity of keeping him away from court.¹ In spite, however,

¹ Prato, *op. cit.*

of all his faults and follies, Isabella seems to have been genuinely fond of her nephew, and at his earnest request she consented to pay him another short visit that autumn, and set out on her journey to Milan in September. Her first halt was at Gazzuolo, where her cousins, Madonna Antonia's beautiful daughters, Susanna and Camilla, came out to meet her, and conducted her with every demonstration of respect and affection to the Rocca. Here she spent the evening very pleasantly, and Madonna Camilla first sang alone, accompanying herself on the viol "with infinite grace," and afterwards she and her sister both joined in duets. But when the Marchesa reached Casalmaggiore, she received such bad accounts of her husband's health that she altered her plans and returned to Mantua.¹ All through the winter Francesco Gonzaga was seriously ill, while his subjects suffered severely from the presence of the German and Venetian troops who overran his territory in search of shelter and provisions. The news from Rome also caused Isabella some uneasiness. The Pope was known to entertain ambitious schemes for the advancement of his family. Already, his nephew Lorenzo—the son of Piero dei Medici—was practically despot of Florence, and King Ferdinand, it was openly said, had suggested that Giuliano should receive the investiture of Ferrara. A visit which the Viceroy of Naples and his Spanish suite paid to Mantua that Carnival, had not removed the Marchesa's anxiety, and whether this was owing to the affair of Brognina or to political causes, Cardona had been unusually silent and taciturn. At the same time, the continued presence of the Spaniards in Lombardy

¹ A. Pedrazzoli in *Arch. St. Lomb.*, 1890.

aroused the fears of the Marquis, who, instead of adding Peschiera to his dominions, was in constant dread of losing his own possessions on the Riviera of Garda. Under these circumstances, Isabella decided to take advantage of the first spring days to visit her husband's subjects in these regions, and left Mantua with a train of ninety-three persons and eighty horses on the 15th of March. The letters which she wrote to the Marquis during this fortnight's absence give a charming picture of her journey along the beautiful lake, and show us that, at the age of forty, Isabella's delight in natural beauty was as fresh and spontaneous, and her enjoyment of all the little incidents of travel as keen as when she was a bride of sixteen.

From Goïto she wrote, on the evening of her arrival, saying how she had been received by the Castellan of the Rocca, and after visiting his newborn child, had enjoyed a walk in the green meadows on the banks of the Mincio. The next day she dined at the villa of Cavriana, one of her favourite summer residences, and went on the same afternoon to Lonato, from which her next letter was written, on the 17th of March.

"I arrived here about six o'clock, having driven over from Cavriana in a chariot, and felt broken to pieces by jolting over the stones! But after a good night's rest, I have recovered, and am quite well this morning. A troop of horse rode out to meet me at Solferino, and further on I found one hundred foot soldiers and a number of children, with olive branches and banners bearing our arms, shouting your name and mine. The city gates were hung with evergreens and banners, and at the Town House, where I am staying, I found many ladies waiting to receive me.

The chief citizens came this morning to pay me their respects, and express their regret that, owing to the time of year, they were unable to receive me with greater festivities. They defrayed all my expenses in the most liberal manner, and are good Gonzageschi who will never fail you. You can see into their hearts! I tell Your Excellency this, to confirm you in your good opinion of these loyal subjects. This morning I went to the Church of the Annunciation, which belongs to the Brothers Minor, and is a quiet and pleasant spot. After dinner I visited the Rocca, which I will not describe, as I know you have been there, but must tell you that I never saw a finer situation, and I made them tell me the names of all the countless towns which you can see from the top of the hill, to my great amusement! If you decide to build a villa there, you will be quite right, for it is the most delightful place in the world! All my companions say the air is perfect, and Capilupi especially says that his head and eyes and ears, which have lately given him so much pain, feel better than they have done for long. From the Rocca I went by the gate of Cittadella, to the Church of S. Zeno, past the saw-mills, and enjoyed the sight of the clear stream and the vineyards and fields, which are so well cultivated that they seem to be all gardens. I came back into the town feeling the greatest satisfaction, and am sure, my dear Lord, if you could come and spend some days in this pure air, it would do you all the good in the world. To-morrow I dine at Maguzano with the venerable Fathers, and on Sunday hope to sup at Sermione. I am glad my letter pleased you, and am still more delighted to hear your new pills suit you. Pray let me know how they answer, and

God grant they may do you lasting good ! I thank Your Excellency with all my heart for the good news you give me regarding the safety of my brother the Duke, because I still felt alarmed at the Viceroy's taciturn manner. Now for a real miracle, without which I cannot end this letter ! Yesterday, when the salute was fired in honour of our entry, a ball of lead passed right through the cloak, vest, and shirt of Zanino Mereschalchi, without touching or hurting his arm or any part of his body. I think this is a good augury, and shows that you will keep this city which you value so much.”¹

The next two letters were written from Sermione, the classic promontory sung by Catullus in Roman days. Isabella was enchanted, as might be expected, with the beauty of the spot, and with the wide view over the blue lake and mountains from the ancient citadel built by the Scaligeri princes in the fourteenth century.

“Yesterday,” she wrote on the 19th, “I went to Maguzano, and dined in that charming place, where the good Fathers entertained me very kindly, and I saw many fine mountains on the way back. To-day I came to Sermione, where these poor people received me joyfully, and Girolamo Archano took me over the Rocca and showed me the plan of the new lodgings which you think of building, and which will be very fine. Since you ask for my advice, I told Girolamo—merely to obey your wishes, since really nothing is wanting—to make another room in the tower, as he will tell you. I am sure you are right to build a dwelling-house here, for this place is simply the most beautiful in the world. I went

¹ A. Pedrazzoli, *op. cit.*

round the promontory in a boat, and see that the house will look very well from the lake, and mean to climb the hill to-morrow to consider the subject more closely. If I ever longed to see Your Excellency restored to health, I do so now, in order that you might be able to enjoy these delicious scenes. But your letter of to-day troubles me sadly, and makes me fear that the pills have not done you as much good as you had hoped. But you must not be disappointed at this, because medicine does not act upon us as quickly as we expect; and now the fine weather is coming, I feel sure that, with careful diet, your health will soon improve. God grant this! I will not hide from you that I have taken bodily possession of this place. For in descending the steps of the Rocca, which were wet after a little shower of rain, my foot slipped and I fell three steps, without hurting myself in the least, and only laughed at the flowery speeches of the Vicar, who said that perhaps my fall was caused by my excessive admiration for the beauty of the view! Certainly the situation of the Rocca is splendid, but the rooms are so dark and small that I am obliged to lodge in the priest's house, where there is only one room in which I have to eat and sleep; so you must make haste and build some fine lodgings. One of my maidens has also taken possession of Lonato! for the mule which Livia rode on the way from Maguzano ran away and she fell off, one foot remaining in the stirrup and the other in the air, so that she made a most ridiculous figure, and if the others had not come to her help quickly, she would have broken her neck. Thank God, she was not hurt! Travelling would be very dull if such absurd accidents did not

sometimes happen! My headache and sore throat are nearly gone. I hope to enjoy this lovely spot to-morrow, and Your Excellency may be sure that I shall be happy, and I thank you again for allowing me to come here, and for sending me good accounts of Federico and the other children."

"To resume my tale," the Marchesa continued two days later: "Yesterday I climbed the hill to see the Roman ruins, and entered the grottoes to examine them thoroughly. They are truly marvellous, especially to some one like myself who has not seen Rome, and I do not wonder that the Romans loved this place and chose it for their pleasure-houses, because it is most beautiful and worthy of noble villas. If God gives Your Excellency health, and we are able to come back together and enjoy these places in peace, we ought to build a *Casino*, not for the fame of the State, but for pleasure and delightful conversation. I spent all day on foot or horseback, contemplating the ruins or the view. To-day I have been to Peschiera, stopping to visit the sanctuary of the Madonna of the Ash-trees, who is said to work so many miracles. I saw many images and *ex votos*, and the beginnings of a fine church, in which I prayed earnestly for Your Excellency's health. Afterwards I rode through the town and found the Castellan, a Spanish captain, who courteously took me into the Rocca, where, seeing that he had only twelve or fifteen men of small stature, I and my ladies could easily have taken him and his troops prisoners, and made myself mistress of the place, without much blasphemy on the part of the King of France or the Emperor, since the Spaniards hold it unjustly! The situation

of Lonato, I repeat, is fine, that of Sermione is finer, but that of Peschiera is the finest of all. And so we must do our utmost to recover the place. I confess that I returned to Sermione in a fit of bad temper, which is not yet over, thinking of the great wrong which has been done us, and seeing how useless the place is to the Catholic king, and how pleasant and useful it would be to us. But I will say no more about this now. To-morrow I shall visit the island of the Friars Minor, and go on to sleep at Salò. That Spanish Governor told me that I could easily find rooms there, and courteously invited me to visit the place. Afterwards, I shall return along this shore, while the weather is fine, although it is too early to find anything to enjoy here, excepting the pure air. I would have sent you some fish, but know you do not eat it, nor any fruit, and indeed very little fish has been caught, and since I have been here I have not seen a single sardine. They say that the air is too clear and the winds are in the wrong quarter."

The next day Isabella rowed across to the little island and saw the ancient church, built by St. Francis on the ruins of a temple of Jupiter, and crossed over to the picturesque Riviera, where the tall church and roofs of Salò nestle among orange and lemon groves, at the foot of Monte Pennino. On the 23rd, she gave the Marquis her usual account of her doings:—

"Yesterday, as I told you, I went to the *Isola dei Frati*. The place and situation are both fine, but badly supplied with fruit and delicacies—how could it be otherwise? The Friars welcomed me warmly, and the captain of Salò, Guglielmo di

Castiglio, a chamberlain and creature of the Viceroy, came there to meet me with many followers and boats, and made me very courteous offers of service. I took him and another Spanish officer in my boat, and his own followed, with more than twenty-five others, all heavily laden. There was much beating of drums, and blowing of trumpets, and prolonged shouts of *Turco! Gonzaga! Isabella!* They escorted me to Salò, and I rowed along under the shore to see the view, which is most beautiful. I landed at the Town-house, where the captain and a great crowd of people had already assembled, so much so, indeed, that I felt quite bewildered. All the citizens welcomed me with acclamation, and both in the hall of the Town-house and under a loggia on the shore of the lake were tables laden with baskets of apples, pears, fresh grapes, boxes of sweetmeats, marzipane, wax, *confetti*, and dishes of every kind of fish, in large quantities. The chief citizens made me long and fine speeches, and I replied with many compliments on behalf of Your Excellency, in whose name these honours were paid me, and perhaps some day we may find it useful to have them for our friends. After I reached my rooms, the captain, who had taken leave of me at the door, sent me a fine present of fish, apples, and fresh grapes. I did not remember him, but he says that he came to Mantua with the Viceroy, and again with Celindo (the Viceroy's chamberlain) to arrange Brognina's affair, and he was very courteous and pleasant. To-day I am staying here to see the place, and visit the convents of friars and sisters. To-morrow I shall drive to Grignano to see Tusculano and the other gardens, and if it is fine return by water.

Saturday being the Feast of the Annunciation, I shall attend divine service with these sisters. On Sunday I mean to row across the lake and sleep at Laciso, to see the other shore, and on Monday I shall go to Peschiera, and so return to Mantua. I will say no more, only that each time I see another lovely spot, I wish most earnestly that you may be restored to health and come here with me.

“*P.S.*—I have found nothing on this Riviera likely to please you, excepting some young kids, of which I send you four, hoping you will enjoy them for my sake. We shall eat the fish, as so few have been caught. The men of Sermione will take the kids alive to Mantua.”

It was at Salò, on this sunny Lady-day, that Isabella received the gift of Giangiorgio Trissino's new volume of *Ritratti*, or Portraits of the Ladies of Italy, in which he pays her a splendid tribute.¹ This learned Vicenza poet, the intimate friend of Bembo, and the foremost humanist of the day, first met the Marchesa at Milan in 1507, and received much kindness from her when he was driven from his native city by the cruel wars that ravaged Venetia.

During these long years of exile, he often sought shelter at Mantua, and Isabella recommended him alike to Cardinal Gurk and to her brother and friends in Rome. Trissino was deeply attached to Margherita Pia, the sister of Emilia Pia and of Alda, the mother of Veronica Gambara, and after the death of her first husband, Antonio di Sanseverino, wooed this charming lady during many years. But although she was sincerely attached to Trissino, and called herself a *Margherita infelicissima* in his absence, she refused to

¹ B. Morsolin, *Vita di G. G. Trissino*.

marry again, and ended her days in a convent at Carpi. The poet had another patron in Isabella's devoted friend, Margherita Cantelma, the widowed Duchess of Sora, who had accompanied her on this occasion to Garda. As they travelled along the shores of the fair lake, Margherita told the Marchesa of the new book which the Vicentine poet had composed—a symposium in the style of Castiglione's *Cortigiano* on the fair women of ancient and modern times. The scene is laid in the Cantelma Palace at Ferrara, and one of the speakers, Vincenzo Magrè, after enumerating the beauties of Milan and Ferrara, Florence and Vicenza, paints a glowing picture of an unknown lady whom he saw descend from her chariot in the streets of Milan and go into the Duomo with a prayer-book open in her hand. “Neither Mantegna, nor Vinci, nor yet Apelles could ever do her justice. Petrarch has best described her in his lines : *Una Donna più bella assai che'l sole*. So she dawned upon my eyes, a lady more radiant than the sun, with golden hair falling on her shoulders, loosely caught up in a tan-coloured silk net, with knots of fine gold, through which her locks shone like bright rays of light ; a sparkling ruby and large pearl glittered on her forehead, a rope of pearls hung from her neck to her waist, her black velvet robe was embroidered in gold—in short, everything she wore was the work of the finest craftsmen.” Here the second speaker, who is no less a personage than Pietro Bembo, the prince of humanists, breaks in : “Say no more ! I know the lady of whom you speak—Madonna, the Marchesa of Mantova, who is honoured and loved by the whole world. But you have only seen her once, while I have often spoken with her, and can tell of her

sweetness and goodness, and virtues, which are far beyond the adorning of gold and jewels. I have heard her voice, which, in the words of Petrarch, is a thing *chiara, soave, angelica, e divina*. It would have charmed Orpheus and Amphion themselves by its entrancing sweetness. . . . And if you had once heard her sing to the lute you would, like the Sirens, forget home and country to follow its enchanted melody. . . . Truly, God has given her all the gifts of all the Muses, all the treasures of Castaly and Parnassus; but, above all, she loves poetry, as is meet for a princess who reigns over the land of Virgil." After this, he goes on to praise the beauty of her home, its fair and stately fabric adorned with superb hangings, the charming little rooms full of rare books and beautiful pictures, of antique and modern sculpture, of cameos, medals, and gems, and ends by declaring her worthy to rank with the wisest women of ancient Hellas, with Nausicaa and Sappho and Corinna, with Penelope and Alcesteis.¹

Isabella's curiosity was naturally much excited when she heard from her friend's lips of Trissino's work, and Margherita wrote to desire the poet to send it to her without delay. So the precious manuscript, richly bound and accompanied by a letter and dedicatory epistle in verse, reached the Marchesa at Salò on the Feast of the Annunciation, and she acknowledged the gift in a grateful letter written on the same day:—

"*Magnifico Amico*,—Your letter, verses, and little book could not have found us in a fairer and more appropriate spot than this Riviera di Garda, where we now are, able to give ourselves wholly to poetry and

¹ G. Trissino, *Ritratti*.

meditation. We accept them gladly, both as your composition, and, in our opinion, most elegant and ingenious, although indeed your praises of us far exceed the truth. But, as the common proverb says, 'If you do not speak the truth, none the less your words please me,' and we shall count them dear as coming from so learned and noble a writer, and will not publish the secret of their authorship to others, since this is your wish, as it is also our own. We should like you to alter some particulars in the description of our person, which we will point out when we meet. We wish that you could have brought the book to us yourself, because we are exceedingly anxious to see you and enjoy your company before you go to Rome, but the coming of the Spaniards to Mantua for the Carnival, and our journey to this lake, prevented us from sending you an invitation, while preparations for your visit to Rome hindered you from coming to see us. But another time we will take care that your pleasure shall be ours, and your convenience agreeable to us. We wish you a good journey, and if we can in any way oblige you, do not scruple to ask our good offices, which will be always at your disposal. We do not now send you anything in return for your beautiful book, having nothing worthy of you, but Your Magnificence knows that the heart feels more than the tongue can speak, and later on we shall hope to thank you in person. Meanwhile, you will hear of us more fully from Signora Margherita Cantelma, and since we do not know how your affairs at Vicenza are prospering, you must tell us if we can help you, and may always depend on our good will. *Bene valete.*"¹ Salò, 25th March 1514.

¹ A. Pedrazzoli, *op. cit.*; B. Morsolin, *op. cit.*

On the same evening, Isabella sent her husband the following lively letter, in which politics and grave questions of state are mingled with amusing accounts of her own experiences and adventures:—

“Your Excellency acts like a prudent doctor, and gives me pink sugar to take away the bitter taste of your medicine! If my stomach was upset by the last news you sent me, your letter of yesterday has quite settled it again. I am truly glad to hear that the Duke of Milan’s affairs are in a less dangerous condition than you feared, and that those of my brother the Duke have come safely into port, and also that the Pope appears to be so well-disposed towards our own State. I thank Your Excellency exceedingly, and kiss your hand and lips for sending me all this good news, which will make me enjoy this beautiful land more than ever, thanks to your goodness and kindness. Yesterday I was at Grignano, where the inhabitants entertained me with gifts of fish and pomegranates, and also with a long Italian oration delivered by a tiresome pedant in the most ornate language. Nor let Your Signory imagine that this was the first, although it certainly was the most wonderful, to which I have had to listen. At Lonato, I heard three: two in Italian, spoken by the citizens, and one in Latin, delivered by a child of seven! At Sermione, two more from the Sindaco of the Commune, and a third from the Vicar. Here at Salò, two of medium excellence—neither too exquisite nor yet too vulgar—but more useful, since they were accompanied by a fine present, as I told Your Excellency. All along this Riviera they receive me with royal honours, as a *Magnifica Signora*! I spent to-day visiting churches and convents, and attended

high mass at the chief church, which is much finer than any of ours in Mantua, and has a large college of priests and singers. This is really a delightful place, and I do not wonder that Rouen (Cardinal d'Amboise) appropriated it to his own use, and that Gurk, out of rivalry, tried to acquire it for himself! I have enjoyed the lovely scenery and fine air of all these places extremely, and the weather has been very kind to me, but all the more delicate fruit trees have been killed by the severity of the two last winters. I fill the sheet with these trifles, because I have nothing better to say! To-morrow we go back to Sermione, and have given up Laciso, because the accommodation is too bad. Then we shall return to Mantua, where I trust I may find Your Excellency in better health than when you wrote last, as I still hope that this spring weather may do you good. And may God have mercy on you!"

The next day Isabella rowed back across the lake to Sermione, since it was impossible to find lodgings for so large a suite in the villages on the eastern side of the lake, at the foot of Monte Baldo. From here she wrote a last letter to her husband:—

"I read your letter of yesterday, in reply to mine, with great pleasure, since you speak of some improvement in your health, and hope, now that the spring has come and you can take change of air, you will go on improving steadily. This afternoon I came here, and have been more enthusiastically welcomed than ever by the poor people, who came out in their boats and small crafts, hung with laurels, to meet me, and greeted me with much shouting and ringing of bells. Certainly these poor fellows show great affection for Your Excellency. If I had allowed it, they would

have entertained me entirely at their own expense. The governor of the Commune accompanied me to Salò with two boats, and kept them there for the use of my household, and now they have made me a fresh present of fish. I tell Your Excellency this, to show you how loving and faithful they are. To-day has not been without its event, for this evening my page, Rodolfo, was about to jump from the bridge of the Rocca to the drawbridge, when a wooden post suddenly gave way and he fell into the moat. Luckily I saw him fall, and had a pole thrown down, by which he kept himself from sinking till a rope could be let down to draw him up, and this prompt help, together with his own agility, saved his life. He was not in the least hurt, but it was fortunate I was near the bridge, or perhaps no one would have seen him fall. To-morrow I spend here, Tuesday we go to Goïto, and on Wednesday hope to be back at Mantua.”¹

Isabella had not been at home many weeks before pressing invitations reached her from her nephew Maximilian, who declared if she did not come this time, he would appear at Mantua with his Swiss troops, and carry her off by force. At length, she obtained her husband's leave to pay him her long-deferred visit, and in the early summer days she set out for Milan with a great train of ladies and courtiers. The whole city turned out to meet her, and greeted her with enthusiastic acclamations as she rode up through the gates where the Moro and Beatrice had often welcomed her, into the Castello of the Sforzas. Here the Duke entertained her as before with a round of festivities, and took her with him to Pavia, which

¹ A. Pedrazzoli, *op. cit.*

she had not seen since those brilliant days of old. It was for the last time ; Maximilian's throne was already tottering to its fall, and before the year was over he had been driven into exile, and the victor of Marignano was reigning in his stead.

CHAPTER XXVIII

1514—1516

Isabella's visit to Rome—Her reception by Cardinal Bibbiena and Giuliano dei Medici—Fêtes in her honour—Representation of "La Calandria" in the Vatican—Her visit to Naples—Leo X. keeps her in Rome for the carnival—Her return to Mantua and regrets for Rome—Francis I. attacks Milan—Victory of Marignano—Abdication of Maximilian Sforza—Federico Gonzaga at the French Court—Death of Giuliano—Conquest of Urbino by Lorenzo dei Medici—Flight of the Duke and Duchesses to Mantua.

IN the autumn of 1514, one of Isabella's most cherished and long-delayed wishes was at length fulfilled, and for the first time in her life she went to Rome. Since the accession of Leo X. she had received pressing invitations from her friends, Cardinal Bibbiena and Pietro Bembo, but had been compelled to defer her visit owing to Francesco's ill-health. During that summer, however, his condition showed some signs of improvement, while the alarming rumours which came from Rome of the Pope's designs against Ferrara and Urbino increased Isabella's anxiety to cultivate the Pontiff's friendship. Accordingly she started for Rome early in October, and was met at Bolsena by Giuliano dei Medici, Cardinal Bibbiena, and l'Unico Aretino. Since his brother Pietro Accolti's elevation to the Cardinalate, the vanity of this popular *improvisatore* knew no bounds. He spoke openly of that prelate as the next Pope, and

announced that he himself would not be satisfied with anything short of the crown of Naples and the hand of the widowed Duchess. On this occasion he declared that he held a papal bull empowering him to act as commissioner in bringing the Marchesa to Rome; upon which Bibbiena and Giuliano endeavoured to mystify him by pointing out first one lady of Isabella's suite, then another, as the Marchesa, until he was about to give up the search in despair. When at length he discovered the trick which his companions had played upon him, he broke into a furious passion, and his rage excited the merriment of the whole company.

On the 18th of October, Isabella entered Rome, and received the most cordial welcome from Pope Leo and all the members of the Sacred College. During the next six weeks her time was spent in visiting the remains of ancient Rome and the wonders of the Vatican. She saw with her own eyes the statues of which she had heard so much from Cristoforo Romano and Bembo and her own son Federico, and realised all that Castiglione and Bibbiena had said of the sublime greatness of Michel Angelo's creations and of the surpassing grace and perfection of Raphael's art. She climbed the Capitol with the thought of Mantegna's Triumphs in her heart, and looked down from the Loggia of the Belvedere on the purple plains of the Campagna and the Alban Hills. She knelt with deep devotion at the shrine of the Prince of the Apostles, and walked in Angelo Colocci's famous gardens on the slopes of the Pincio and Quirinal, attended by the foremost scholars of the day. Bembo and Bibbiena, Sadoletto and Castiglione were the com-

panions of her daily walks and rides in the Eternal City. The learned librarian of the Vatican, Tommaso Inghirami, the Phædrus of the humanists, became one of the Marchesa's greatest admirers, while Colocci discussed Provençal poetry with her, and asked her to accept a copy of his rare book on the Limousin poets. Chigi entertained her at magnificent feasts in his new villa, where the costliest wines and rarest delicacies were served on the most exquisitely wrought gold and silver plate, in halls adorned by the first painters of the day. There Isabella saw Raphael's beautiful fresco of the milk-white Galatea driving her chariot on the waves, which was the wonder and delight of all the humanists in Rome and Urbino. And Raphael himself was in all likelihood the Marchesa's guide among the excavations, and showed her the wonderful paintings and stuccoes which had been lately brought to light in the Baths of Titus and the Golden House of Nero. Isabella certainly met the great master, who was then at the height of his fame and had recently been appointed architect of St. Peter's by the Pope. And as he talked with her of the old days of Urbino, of his father, who had painted her portrait, and of his first patrons, the good Duke and Duchess, she begged him with a charming smile to paint a little Madonna for her whenever he had a few spare moments. Of course Raphael, who was "*la gentilezza stessa*," promised gladly, and then went back to his frescoes and buildings and his plans of ancient Rome, and forgot all about the Marchesa and her picture.

Cardinals and princes vied with each other in doing their illustrious guest honour, and entertained her at sumptuous banquets or dainty little suppers,

where the Aretine recited his latest verses and the Pope's pet buffoon, Fra Mariano, indulged in those mad freaks that afforded His Holiness such infinite amusement and made his guests laugh till the tears ran down their cheeks. But the most memorable of all the entertainments that were given in Isabella's honour was the representation of Cardinal Bibbiena's "Calandria" before the Pope in the Vatican.¹ This comedy had been acted for the first time at Urbino on the 6th of February 1513, under the direction of Castiglione, who himself described the performance in a well-known letter to Cardinal Lodovico di Canossa. The play, an evident imitation of the "Menæchmi" of Plautus, deals with the ridiculous adventures of a twin brother and sister, whose love intrigues and mistakes afford plenty of material for that broad farce in which the Cardinal's contemporaries took unfailing delight. On this occasion the scenery was painted by the Siena master, Baldassarre Peruzzi, and was of the most elaborate kind. Vasari expatiates on the beauty and variety of the spectacle, on the streets, palaces, temples, loggias, and piazzas, all in admirable perspective, that were cleverly introduced into this limited space, in such a manner as to give the impression of a city of great size and extent. The interludes of ballets and tableaux, transformation scenes and allegorical representations were planned on the most gorgeous scale, and the music of flutes and viols and sweet voices of the singers were blended exquisitely with the melodies of the Pope's new organ, that splendid instrument which had been recently made for him and brought to Rome by Lorenzo da Pavia.

¹ D'Ancona, *op. cit.*, ii. 88.

Towards the end of November, Isabella paid a visit to Naples, and saw the stately palaces and delicious gardens of that fair city where her grandfather, uncles, and cousin had reigned in turn, and which was now the home of the Spanish Viceroy. The only member of her mother's family whom she found here was her old friend and cousin, Isabella of Aragon, the widowed Duchess of Milan, with her sole surviving daughter, Bona Sforza. It was probably owing to Isabella d'Este's intervention that this young princess was betrothed about this time to her cousin, Maximilian, the young Duke of Milan. But this proposed union, which gave her mother unfeigned joy, never took place, and three years after Maximilian's exile, Bona married the King of Poland, and went to live at Cracow. This youthful princess always retained an affectionate remembrance of the Marchesa, and in 1522, wrote to thank Isabella for sending her the specimens of latest Milanese finery and Mantuan news, addressing her as "the fount and origin of all the beautiful fashions in Italy."¹

In spite of these altered conditions Isabella greatly enjoyed the weeks which she spent at Naples, and was fêted alike by Neapolitan princes and Spanish grandees. In the following short letter to her beloved Federico she briefly alludes to some of the gaieties with which her days are filled :—

"To my dearest and eldest son Federico. Your letter of the 22nd gave me great pleasure. I am glad to see that your generous spirit yields to none in point of courtesy, and that you follow your illustrious father's example by being splendid and liberal. I can only exhort you to persevere in the same

¹ Luzio in *Arch. St. Lomb.*, 1901, p. 171.

course, which will be to us a source of continual joy. For an account of our amusements here, I must refer you to Benedetto Capilupi's letter, in which all my doings are fully described. To-day I have made him give an account of the banquet that was given us by the Count of Chiaramonte, son of the Prince of Bisignano. We wished you could have been present to see how gallantly he entertained me, and realise how fine a thing it is to serve ladies and be able to turn your hand to everything at the right time. Keep well, and embrace your brothers and sisters for me."¹ Naples, November 8, 1514.

Among the nobles by whom the Marchesa was splendidly entertained were Fabrizio Colonna, who had not forgotten the generous treatment shown him by Alfonso d'Este after the battle of Ravenna, and his daughter Vittoria's husband, the Marchese di Pescara. This brilliant young soldier had repeatedly visited his wife's relatives at Mantua, and had received great kindness from Isabella. More than this, he was deeply enamoured of her charming maid-of-honour, Delia, whom he had lately met at Milan, and who was now at Naples with her mistress. This attachment, which Pescara's noble and devoted wife seems never to have suspected, proved more lasting than most *liaisons* of the kind. The Marquis kept up an active correspondence with Delia, and sent her love letters of the most passionate nature. In February 1522, when he was lying wounded in the Rocchetta at Milan, he wrote to Mario Equicola praying to be commended to the Marchesa, whose hand he longs to kiss,

¹ D'Arco, *Notizie d' Isabella*, p, 317.

and adds: "Of Delia I dare say nothing, since I have served her so long." Again in May he speaks of her in a letter from Naples, saying: "God grant that I may see her once more before I die."¹ If Vittoria ever became aware of the Marchese's passion for Isabella's fair maid-of-honour, the knowledge certainly never altered her love for her husband, to whom she remained absolutely devoted, and whose premature death in 1525, she mourned with the truest and most enduring sorrow.

Meanwhile the Marchesa's return was eagerly awaited in Rome, where, by the Pope's orders, a series of new comedies was prepared for her amusement, one of them being the "Andria" of Terence, which had been twice performed at Mantua in 1513. But it seems doubtful if the idea of repeating the "Calandria," to which Agostino Gonzaga alludes in a letter of the 15th of December, was carried out. By the Pope's command, Pietro Bembo wrote to the Marquis of Mantua in January, begging him to allow the Marchioness to remain at Rome for the carnival fêtes, a request which Francesco felt himself unable to refuse. His Holiness had his way, and all the Cardinals rejoiced. "Here," wrote Pietro Bembo, "we have had the gayest of carnivals, thanks to the presence of the Signora Marchesana."² Isabella's society, as the Pope and his pleasure-loving Cardinals declared, supplied the one element that was lacking at the papal court. "All Rome," wrote Cardinal Bibbiena to Giuliano dei Medici, who had gone to France to wed a princess of Savoy—"all Rome

¹ Luzio, *V. Colonna Rivista Mantovana*, 1881.

² *Lettere*, iii. 47.

says that nothing is wanting here but a Madonna to hold a court." The wedding, which had been delayed by the death of Louis XII. on the 1st of January, was solemnised in February, and the Pope was anxious that Isabella should remain in Rome to assist at the festivities in honour of the newly-married pair. But her sick husband was growing restless and impatient at his wife's prolonged absence, and as soon as the carnival fêtes were over, the Marchesa tore herself reluctantly away from Rome and turned homewards. On the way she spent a few days at Florence, where she was sumptuously entertained at the Pope's expense, and lodged in the Medici Palace. After this she travelled by rapid stages to Ferrara, and reached Mantua on the 18th of March. That evening she wrote a letter full of regrets and affectionate messages to Bibbiena:—

"I am here in Mantua, but all my heart is in Rome. At least I can feel that I have obeyed and satisfied my husband. But only think how different these little rooms and the life I lead here are from the Vatican halls and the life which I led in Rome! My body, as I repeat, is here, but my soul is there! In spirit I am still taking walks with you, enjoying your conversation and that of the other Lord Cardinals, and kissing the feet of His Holiness. With such fond imaginations I try and deceive myself, and spend the time with less ennui, while I await an occasion to serve Your Most Reverend Highness, in return or at least in recognition of the infinite obligations which your kindness has laid upon me."¹

¹ Luzio e Renier, *Mantova e Urbino*, p. 215.

Many were the gifts which she sent to Bembo and Bibbiena during the next few months — dishes of salmon-trout from Garda, and boxes of the rare perfumes which excited the envy of all Bembo's friends. But the most singular present, and one of those which these luxurious Monsignori appreciated the most, was a quilt of choice feathers and richly embroidered satin, which the Marchesa sent to Cardinal Bibbiena that autumn. In December, Bembo wrote begging her, as she loved her old friend, to give him a similar quilt, that he may enjoy the same refreshing slumber and dream the same happy dreams. To this valued gift the Cardinal alludes in a long and intimate letter, which shows that Isabella had not neglected any opportunities of pleading her brother's cause and advancing the interests of her husband's State during the gay Carnival that she spent in Rome. In the course of this letter, which was written from Florence when in the following spring he accompanied Leo X. to his native city, Bibbiena says:—

“Your Excellency, in her kind and courteous letter, tells me that she has so much idle time on her hands that she is ready to make a present of it to the first comer, which seems a difficult thing to believe, knowing as I do that even if you had no other occupation than your own wise and charming thoughts, you could never be idle. In truth, like that old Roman (was it Scipio?) who was never less alone than when alone, Your Excellency may say you are never idle when you are most idle. I showed your letter to His Holiness, who read it very gladly, and with more praises of you than I can possibly express, saying that the affairs of your brother, the

Duke, were already arranged according to your desire, and could not be altered. Towards this happy settlement His Holiness was from the first so naturally inclined that there has been little need of my intervention. But I will not deny that, besides his personal inclination, the great respect and affection with which His Holiness regards Your Excellency has considerably helped to bring about this fortunate result. I will obey Your Excellency with regard to what you mentioned to me in Rome, and will not breathe a syllable to any one, but wait until you think the right moment has come. As for your illustrious son, I really believe he will turn out as well as you desire, thanks to your prudence and loving exhortations and to his own excellent nature. I am delighted to hear of Your Excellency's high credit and favour with your illustrious husband, which must give you the greatest satisfaction. I rejoice greatly over this, but beg you not to make too large demands on his favour, lest you should some day live to repent of it. I am also very glad to hear the said Signore your husband is better, and pray that God may restore him completely to health, so that Your Excellency may be the better able to enjoy his affection. The feather quilt which Your Excellency sent me could not be more acceptable than it is, both on account of its rare delicacy and beauty, and still more because it comes from you. Certainly I have never slept better in my life, and I should not forswear myself were I to swear to Your Excellency that not a single night passes in which I do not remember you! His Holiness hopes that you will send him the one of which you speak in your letter, and really

likes the idea of the gift extremely, so that Your Excellency may safely have it made and sent to Rome at once. The fact is, you may, I assure you, treat His Holiness with as much friendliness as you would Monsignore your brother, since it is certain you are as dear to him as a sister or daughter. And you need never be afraid of tiring me with your letters, which are so delightful that, if I were not the most discreet of persons, I should beg you to let me hear from you every day! But since you write to me with your own hand, I will not venture on such a request—not that I do not wish for your letters greatly, but that I fear to tire Your Excellency. Isabella's messages give me supreme satisfaction, since I have always loved and shall love Isabella more than myself, whether or not she herself loves Mario!"¹

When the Marchesa received this witty letter the joys of her visit to Rome already lay far behind her. The year which began so gaily had brought heavy sorrows and anxieties in its train, and it needed all her foresight and prudence to cope with the difficulties in her way. The accession of a young and martial king to the throne of France had worked a complete revolution in Italian affairs, and the disastrous defeat of the Swiss at Marignano had sealed the doom of the luckless Maximilian Sforza. On the 4th of October 1515, he surrendered the Castello, and abdicated his throne in favour of Francis I., who allowed him to live in France on a comfortable pension. The event can hardly have surprised the Marchesa, who by this time can have had no illusions as to her nephew's weakness and incapacity; but she still retained a

¹ Luzio e Renier, *op. cit.*, App. v.

kindly feeling for the unfortunate youth, and from his exile at Amboise he sent her a letter by the hand of his Master of the Horse assuring her of his welfare and unalterable affection, and calling her his second mother. "I am well, thank God, and as happy as my friends can wish to see me, and thought I would inform Your Excellency of this, since, knowing that you love me as you do, this will give you pleasure. —Your obedient nephew and son, MAXIMILIAN."¹ October 6, 1516.

Isabella's chief anxiety now was to make friends with the victor, and Francis I. on his part was no less eager to see the brilliant Marchesa. She, however, declined his pressing invitation, pleading her lord's ill-health as an excuse, and decided to send her son, Federico, to do homage to the young king in his father's stead. The three years which Federico had spent at the court of Julius II. had not been thrown away. If his Roman experiences can hardly be said to have exerted a beneficial effect on his morals, they had made him a finished courtier, graceful and attractive in person, quick and ready of speech, as well as wise and cautious beyond his years. Since his return he had pursued his studies during two years and a half in the charge of his excellent tutor, Vigilio, under the eye of his careful mother. Amid all the attractions and excitements of Rome, Isabella never forgot the boy whose welfare lay so near her heart, and received constant reports of his progress from good Messer Francesco.

"During Your Highness's absence," he writes on the 5th of February 1515, "your son, my master Signor Federico, has not failed to attend my instructions twice a day. It is true that he cannot keep

¹ Luzio, *Arch. St. Lomb.*, 1901, p. 168.

up his attention for more than an hour, or a little longer, but during this time he is really attentive and diligent. We have gone through the abridged history of Livy, and he has translated two books of Valerius with me at hand to help him when he seemed puzzled, and now he knows Roman history and the laws and constitution of the State so well, that he can sometimes remind me of things that I have forgotten, and even find me the passage I require. I have taught him a work of Ovid, *In Ibm*, full of little-known stories and fables, and he seems particularly fond of history, which I think is especially useful for a prince. I have also read some beautiful elegies with him. He does not find verses easy, although he knows how to scan them, but he construes orations very easily. Every day I dictate some Epistles to him, which he writes correctly—unless he makes an accidental slip—and every day I expound an Epistle of Cicero to him, in order that he may acquire a good style. In the grammar examination he answered my questions more quickly and better than any of the other boys. I have made him run through Petrarch, as good practice in reading, and he himself has chosen to read some books of the *Orlando*, on which he often spends as much as two hours at a time. This is our method of learning letters. As for his conduct in other ways, I see nothing in him which does not lead me to hope for a glorious and honourable career, and although the natural ardour of youth inclines him to love, his conduct in this respect persuades me that he will avoid the licence which is displeasing both to God and men. I earnestly entreat Your Excellency to condescend to help my labours with your

exhortations.—Your devoted servant, JO. FRANC. VIGILIUS.”

The excellent tutor's description of Federico's tastes and habits agrees with all we know of this prince in after life. Without ever attaining to his mother or brother Ercole's love of learning, he was decidedly more cultured than his father or Gonzaga uncles, and from his boyhood he inherited the Estes' passion for chivalrous romances, of which he made a large collection in future years. Now, at the age of fifteen, he asked nothing better than to leave his books and seek fresh experiences at the gay court of Milan. Here he found a gracious reception and was invited to accompany Francis I. to Vigevano. The Venetian envoy, Contarini, describes Federico as a handsome and graceful boy, who entertained the young patricians in his suite at a feast that was equally remarkable for good cheer and good company, and sent them away charmed with his courtesy and amazed at his feats of horsemanship. The young prince took an active part in the royal hunting parties and games at *palla*. His letters to his mother give a lively picture of His Most Christian Majesty joining in the game of *palla* in as vigorous a fashion as any football player of to-day, giving and receiving blows in the scuffle, knocking over his courtiers, and coming into violent collision with the tall and athletic Gonzaga prince, Federico of Bozzolo, amidst the laughter of the bystanders. But Isabella's son, who had barely two hundred ducats in his purse, found it quite impossible to accept the king's invitation to play cards with him, and win or lose hundreds of ducats in a single game.¹

¹ M. Sanuto, *Diarii*, xxi. 296, 329.

The young king was much fascinated by the beauty and rich attire of the Milanese ladies, and desired Federico to ask his mother, of whose taste and charms he heard so much, to send him a wax doll clad in the Mantuan style, with the pattern of robe, vest and sleeves worn by herself, and hair dressed in the same fashion, so that the French ladies might be able to copy them. Isabella replied: "We will gladly send a figure arrayed in all the fashions that we wear on our backs and heads, to please His Most Christian Majesty, but fear he will see nothing new, as here we dress exactly in the same style as the Milanese ladies."¹ It was a more serious matter when Francis I. expressed the keenest curiosity to see Brognina, the fair but frail maid-of-honour whose flirtations had already excited so many quarrels, and actually sent the Bishop of Nice with a forged papal brief to bring her from the convent at Goïto. Fortunately a band of Spanish cavaliers, whose help Brognina implored, waylaid the party, and compelled this worthless prelate to beat an ignominious retreat.² In spite of this discreditable affair, Federico succeeded in retaining the king's favour, and Isabella consented reluctantly to allow her son to return with him to France in January. On this journey, as before, Federico was accompanied by his trusted servant, Stazio Gadio, who in his letters to the Marchesa describes the king's entry into Marseilles, where the life of St. Louis was represented in a series of tableaux. At Aix, scenes from the Old Testament were performed in his honour, while at Avignon Federico witnessed a

¹ Luzio, *Nuova Antologia*, 1896, p. 466.

² Luzio in *Arch. St. Lomb.*, 1901, p. 167.

dance of Jews and Jewesses, and a curious representation in which three figures, clad as St. Peter, Martha, and Mary Magdalene, came out to welcome the king's return, as of old "they had rejoiced over the resurrection of Lazarus!" During the next spring and summer, Federico remained at the French court, and accompanied Francis I. to Blois, Amboise, and his other royal châteaux.

But if all fear of danger from this quarter was removed, the Marchesa watched with increasing anxiety the development of the Pope's ambitious designs against Urbino. In June 1515, the bâton of Papal Gonfaloniere was suddenly withdrawn from Francesco Maria and bestowed upon Giuliano dei Medici, and although Leo X. assured the Duke of Urbino of his unchanging friendship, not even Bibbiena's protestations could remove Isabella's suspicions. The Pope's duplicity in the matter has been abundantly proved, and when Francis I. came to meet him at Bologna in December, before his return to France, he reluctantly consented to sacrifice Urbino in return for the restoration of Parma and Piacenza. As long, however, as his brother Giuliano lived, Leo X. refrained from action. This prince could not forget the debt of gratitude which he owed to the ducal family and the ties of old friendship and affection which bound him to the Gonzagas and Della Roveres, and when the Pope came to see him at Fiesole in his last illness, he begged him with his dying breath not to attack the Duke of Urbino. But Leo only told him to get well and not trouble himself about such matters.¹ On the 19th of February the Pope returned to Rome, and Bibbiena, who

¹ Alberi, *Relazioni Venete*, series iii. 2; Dennistoun, ii. 346, &c.

remained at Fiesole, wrote to Isabella, saying that he had given his dying friend her kind messages, but that he feared there was little hope of the Duke's recovery. A month later Giuliano died—on the 17th of March—lamented by all the friends of his family as the best of the Medici. His office of Gonfaloniere of the Church was immediately bestowed on his nephew, Lorenzo, and the Duke of Urbino was summoned to appear in Rome and answer a long list of charges, including the murder of Cardinal Alidosi, under Pope Julius II.

In vain young Federico Gonzaga interceded with Francis I. on his brother-in-law's behalf; in vain the widowed Duchess Elisabetta herself hastened to Rome to see the Pope, and remind Lorenzo of the days when his father had sought refuge at Urbino, and she had nursed him in her own arms. His Holiness received her with the greatest cordiality, the Cardinals flocked to pay her court, and Bembo once more assured her of his unalterable devotion. But when at a subsequent audience the Duchess appealed to the Holy Father's compassion, and reminded him of their old friendship, and of the hospitality which he and his dead brother had enjoyed at Urbino during their exile, the Pope only shrugged his shoulders and looked at her through his eye-glass. "Ah! Holy Father," continued the Duchess, gathering courage as she spoke, "do you not remember how in those days we used to pray that you might be restored to your own? And do you wish to drive us out of house and home, and turn us out to beg our way in the world? Do you not remember yourself how bitter a thing it is to roam over Italy as an exile and a beggar?" But

the Pope refused to utter a single word, and the poor Duchess returned to Urbino in despair.¹

On the 27th of April, Francesco Maria was excommunicated and deprived of his states, and in May, Lorenzo dei Medici invaded Urbino at the head of 20,000 men. The Duke, with the help of a brave Mantuan captain, Alessio Beccaguto, whom his father-in-law had sent to his assistance, made a vain attempt at resistance, but his own subjects turned against him, and after throwing his guns into the river, he retired to Pesaro. Here he embarked with the two Duchesses and all his most valuable property, and travelled by sea to Mantua.

A violent tempest drove the ships in which the unfortunate refugees sailed across the Adriatic, and, according to one account, "some 700 miles to the east, almost on to the Slavonian shores," but at length the fury of the gale abated, and on the 8th of June they reached Pietola, where lodgings had been hurriedly prepared for them. Isabella herself was staying with her kinsman Luigi Gonzaga in his summer palace of Borgoforte, on the Po, some miles south of Mantua, and here the poor Duchesses came to visit her, but the Marquis shrank from exciting the Pope's displeasure by receiving the exiles under his own roof, and they decided to remain at Pietola for the present.

"To-day," wrote Ippolito Calandra to his young lord Federico Gonzaga, "Isabella Lavagnola came to Mantua, to send beds to Pietola for the Duke and Duchesses of Urbino, who are expected there to-night. Their little son, Signor Guidobaldo, has already been lodged in Your Highness's rooms in the Corte for the last four days, and is the cleverest

¹ Luzio e Renier, *Mantova*, p. 229.

and most charming child in the world. He talks boldly of all the great things he will do, and says: 'If Pope Leo had come by himself, he could never have taken my father's State!' and other things which make us all marvel, since he is only just two years old. The rooms of the Duke and Duchess are being prepared in the Corte." But a few days later the same writer explained that the illustrious exiles and their suite are to remain at Pietola for the present, until the Pope has granted permission for them to come to Mantua, and are made as comfortable as they can be under present circumstances. "Yesterday," he continues, "my mother and I went to see Their Highnesses, and kissed their hands, and the Duke and Duchess immediately asked after you and how you like France, and many other things. Before I left, the widowed Duchess came out under the loggia to enjoy the cool evening air. The young Duchess went upstairs to bed, the Duke having sent for her, and I stayed downstairs. Then the widowed Duchess began to tell us how she went to Rome to see the Pope and how badly he had treated her, and when she had finished speaking there was no one who could help weeping."¹

The utmost compassion was felt on all sides for this good and gentle princess, who had thus for the second time been unjustly exiled from her home, and was once more forced to depend upon the charity of others. Fortunately Elisabetta had a kind and loving friend in Isabella, who did all that was possible to alleviate her painful position, and seems to have been more deeply attached to her sister-in-law than she ever was to her own daughter, Duchess Leonora.

¹ Luzio e Renier, *op. cit.*, pp. 228, 229.



"Greece," photo

Walker & Co. 1881. H. 50

Leonora Gonzaga, Duchess of Urbino
by Titian. (Pitti)

CHAPTER XXIX

1516—1519

The Duchesses of Urbino live in great poverty at Mantua—Raphael's dishes melted down—Marriage of Castiglione—Francesco Maria tries to recover Urbino, but is forced to make terms with the Pope—Isabella's journey to Provence—Betrothal of Federico Gonzaga to Maria di Montferrato—Isabella's Latin studies—Visit of Contarini and Soranzo to the Castello—Cristoforo Solari at Mantua—Fra Francesco at Porto—Bandello the novelist—His relations with the Marchesa and pictures of her court.

ON the 18th of August, the Pope's nephew, Lorenzo dei Medici, was created Duke of Urbino, and at the same time Leo X. signed a convention with the Marquis of Mantua by which Francesco Maria, who is described as "formerly Duke of Urbino," and his family were allowed to reside in his father-in-law's dominions, on condition of never leaving them without the Pope's permission, or entering into any negotiations with his former subjects or with other powers.¹ During the next five years the two Duchesses occupied rooms in the Corte Vecchia of the Castello, and only left Mantua to pay an occasional visit to Venice. The Marquis made them a yearly allowance of 6000 ducats, but in spite of this generous pension the poor ladies were often reduced to great straits. Soon after their arrival they were compelled to melt down the costly silver plate which they had brought from

¹ D'Arco in *Arch. St. It.*, App. ii. 285.

Urbino, and amongst others, two magnificent dishes of embossed gilt bronze, which had been designed in antique style by Raphael. Isabella, to whom they were offered in the first place by Elisabetta, who grieved to see such beautiful works of art destroyed, seems to have been unable to raise money for their purchase. Her own private fortune as well as the resources of the State were sorely strained to meet the heavy expenses entailed by the misfortunes which had befallen their kinsfolk. She pledged her jewels and melted down her plate, while new taxes had to be levied and the strictest economy practised in order to supply the new demands upon the Treasury. Her letters to Federico during his absence show how great was the difficulty she found in supplying him with money sufficient to enable him to appear at the French court with the splendour befitting his rank, while at the same time she had to provide for the members of his household at Mantua. "You ask me," she writes, "to pay your servant, Prete Stefano, which I would gladly have done if it had been possible to perform miracles and feed five thousand with a little bread and still less fish. But with twenty-eight or thirty measures of wheat, and eight or nine barrels of Friuli wine, which are all the provisions for your household that remain, it is impossible to keep all your servants. Your tutor, M. Francesco Vigilio, has also asked for help, which we cannot give him." Prete Stefano was a favourite buffoon, who had accompanied Federico to Milan, where he showed off his tricks before the Venetian envoys, and rivalled the famous clown Triboulet. He delighted King Francis by appearing as a woman at a masquerade,

and was pronounced by Alfonso d'Este to be a fool worthy of the greatest monarch in the world.¹

Federico's correspondents, however, had one good piece of news to give in the letters which they addressed to him from Mantua that autumn. This was the marriage of the accomplished courtier Castiglione, who had returned to his old home with the exiled princes of Urbino. On the 17th of October, he took to wife Ippolita Torelli, a fair young girl of fifteen, whose mother was a daughter of Giovanni Bentivoglio, formerly lord of Bologna, and sister of Giovanni Gonzaga's wife. The union had been planned by the Gonzagas, who gladly welcomed the return of their old favourite, and honoured the home-coming of the bride with their presence. The young Duchess Leonora rode out in a chariot to meet her with Laura Bentivoglio, and a long train of courtiers, while Isabella and Elisabetta received her in the bridegroom's house, that ancient thirteenth-century *palazzo* which still rears its stately portals on the Piazza Sordello. As a mark of special favour, the Marquis drove out to the meadows of the Tè, where he kept his vast stables, and descended from his chariot to kiss the bride's hands and welcome the happy pair. Two days afterwards, a dramatic representation was given in honour of this event at the house of Giovanni Gonzaga, in the Borgo Pradella. A comedy called "Gog and Magog," written some years before by Castiglione's dead friend, the young Mantuan poet Falcone, was performed. "Madama was present," writes Amico della Torre to Federico, "with the whole court, and Monsignore de

¹ M. Sanuto, *Diarii*, xxi. 329; Luzio e Renier in *Nuova Antologia*, 1891, 121.

St. Pol, and many French gentlemen, but Lautrec did not come.”¹ From this it appears that Lautrec, the Viceroy of Milan, and several French nobles were being entertained at Mantua by the Marchesa, whose policy it now was to keep on good terms with France, and if possible to detach the king from his alliance with the Pope.

Early in the following year, Francesco Maria made a gallant attempt to recover his dominions, at the head of an army of German, Spanish and French mercenaries which had been disbanded after peace had been made between the Emperor Maximilian and Venice. During eight months the young Duke and his wife’s valiant cousin, Federico Gonzaga of Bozzolo, gallantly opposed the papal forces, with Lorenzo dei Medici and Cardinal Bibbiena at their head, and it was only the arrival of reinforcements, which Francis I. reluctantly sent to the help of his ally, that at length compelled them to abandon the unequal contest. But in the end Leo X. was forced to grant his enemy honourable terms. He paid the arrears due to Francesco Maria’s troops, allowed him to take his guns and the famous library of Urbino back to Mantua, and promised to give the two Duchesses their dowries, a part of the agreement which he never performed.² Meanwhile Francesco Maria returned to Mantua, where Elisabetta and Leonora had been anxiously watching the result of his brave struggle, bringing with him fifty-six banners as trophies of his barren victories and undoubted proofs of his personal prowess.

¹ D’Ancona, *Origini del Teatro*, ii.

² Dennistoun, “Memoirs,” vol. ii. ; Creighton, “History of the Papacy,” v. 278.

In April 1517, Isabella took advantage of her sister and daughter's presence at Mantua to leave her sick husband, and make a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Mary Magdalene at Sainte-Baume, in the hills near Marseilles. After paying her vows at this sanctuary, the Marchesa visited several towns in the south of France, and went as far north as Lyons. The reduced state of her funds compelled her to travel *incognita*, accompanied only by a small suite, among whom were Francesco Gonzaga, afterwards ambassador in Rome, Castiglione's brother-in-law, Tommaso Strozzi, and Mario Equicola. The last-named scholar wrote a pedantic account of this journey, more with the object of showing his learning than of recording facts of interest.¹ At Avignon he recalls the residence of the Popes and memories of Petrarch and Laura, at Marseilles and Arles he mingles philosophical reflections with historical traditions, and only here and there makes some brief allusion to the customs of the people. One day, when the Marchesa was watching a country dance of the peasants, Mario confesses that, having drunk more than was good for him, he not only invited a peasant maid to dance, but embraced her, much to the amusement of his companions, after which he retired to his room to decipher an ancient inscription.² But, wherever the Marchesa went, her beauty and distinguished air attracted the attention of the French ladies, and one of her attendants, Giovanni da Cremona, wrote from Lyons, on the 4th of June, to tell Federico how much his mother was admired. "Your Excellency," he writes, "must know that, whenever Madama is seen passing

¹ *De Isabella Estensis iter in Narbonensem Galliam.*

² F. Santoro, *Iter in Narb. Gall. in Giorn. St. It.*, 1896

through the streets, all the men and women in every rank of life rush to the doors and windows, or stand still in the road, gazing in wonder at her beautiful clothes and those of her ladies. Many persons here say that the clothes which our ladies wear are much finer than any you see in France, and some people have told me that they could hardly believe Madama was the mother of Your Excellency, and felt sure she must be your sister.”¹ When the Marchesa returned to Mantua in July, her old friend Bernardo dei Prosperi, who came to meet her, wrote to Ferrara that she had grown decidedly thinner, but was in radiant health, and as beautiful as she had been twelve years before. A fortnight later, on the Feast of St. Mary Magdalene, Isabella and Federico both assisted at a representation of scenes from the saint’s life, given by some friars who lived in a convent outside the Porta Pradella. The stage was placed against the outer wall of the church, and opposite a spacious wooden tribunal was erected, partly on the ground, partly in the waters of the lake, which bathe the city walls. But, just when the audience was seated, the marshy ground gave way, the wooden stand broke down, and the Marchesa and her companions were suddenly precipitated into the lake. Isabella herself was up to the waist in water, Federico dislocated his ankle, and many of the courtiers and ladies suffered severe contusions. “But, thanks to God and the Magdalene,” remarks Isabella in a lively letter, narrating the incident to Antonia del Balzo, “no lives were lost.”²

Soon after this, a marriage was arranged be-

¹ Luzio in *Nuova Antologia*, 1896.

² Luzio, *Emporium*, 1900, p. 435.

tween Federico and Maria Paleologa, the little eight-year-old daughter of Guglielmo II., Marquis of Monferrato, a descendant of the Emperors who had reigned at Constantinople in the last days of the Eastern Empire. The two families had long been on friendly terms, and one of Isabella's literary friends and constant correspondents, Galeotto di Carreto, lived at the court of Casale. The marriage was first proposed when Federico visited Casale on his return from France, and in October 1517, we find Isabella recommending her old music master, Angela Testagrossa, to the Marchioness Anna of Monferrato, as an excellent teacher for "our common daughter Maria," adding that she herself had once been his pupil, and the fault was not his if she did him little honour!¹ The Marquis of Monferrato died in the following year, leaving a little boy of six and two young daughters to the care of their excellent mother, a princess of the house of Alençon. At the earnest entreaty of the widowed Marchioness, Isabella herself paid a visit to Casale in October 1518, and spent two days at Milan on the way. Here the Milanese courtiers and ladies hastened to pay their respects to the popular Marchesa, who remarked to the Dominican novelist Bandello that she had never seen so many fine chariots and richly adorned equipages before.² On her return in November, she visited Asti and Genoa, and found herself eagerly expected at Mantua by her kind sister-in-law, who declared that she seemed to have been absent a thousand years!

During these last days of her husband's life, when Isabella's time and thoughts were chiefly en-

¹ Davari, *Musica in Mantova*.

² *Novelle*, pt. i. 9.

gaged in conducting diplomatic intrigues which required the greatest tact and delicacy, she had little leisure for study and music, and neither time nor money to devote to the decoration of her rooms and the acquisition of new treasures. But here and there we catch an occasional glimpse of her private life which shows that her tastes and habits remained the same. After her return from Rome, she applied herself with fresh ardour to her Latin studies, under the tuition of Equicola. In March 1516, we find her old servant, Jacopo d'Atri, writing from Naples, to beg she will send him the first Latin work of her composition. Mario, however, was absent at the time, having been sent to offer the young King Charles of Spain the Marchesa's condolence on the death of his grandfather Ferdinand. Later in the summer, he was detained at Ferrara by Alfonso d'Este, who employed him to compose the *historie* with which the painters were to decorate his rooms, and Isabella wrote repeatedly from Porto, begging him to hasten his return, as she was alone and required help in her studies. Equicola, however, put off his return from day to day, and at length, on the 21st of September, she laughingly declared that she had given up all hopes of ever seeing him again, but warned him that, if he did come, she intended to make him work so hard that he would soon give up the ghost! Meanwhile, her beautiful palaces, with their priceless collection of paintings and antiques, excited the admiration of all visitors to Mantua.

In November 1515 the Venetian ambassadors, Zuan and Alvise Contarini, spent two days at Mantua on their way to Milan. A Venetian patrician in their suite, Ser Piero Soranzo, describes how they

arrived by boat late one winter evening, and were conducted by torchlight into the richly perfumed and sumptuously furnished rooms usually occupied by the young lord Federico. Here a dainty supper, consisting of infinite varieties of fish, eggs, tarts, *confetti*, together with eight different sorts of wine, was served, to the sound of exquisite singing and instrumental music. On the following morning, after attending high mass and hearing some fine organ music, the envoys visited the palace of S. Sebastiano, and admired the magnificent series of Triumphs painted by the hand of Mantegna. After this, they were ushered into another suite of apartments, where the same odour of rich perfumes met them on the threshold. Here they found the Marquis reclining on a couch by the hearth of a richly adorned room, with his pet dwarf clad in gold brocade, and three superb greyhounds lying at his feet. Three pages stood by, waving large fans, lest even a hair should fall upon him; a quantity of falcons and hawks in leash were in the room, and the walls were hung with pictures of favourite dogs and horses. Francesco received the envoys graciously, and gave orders that they should be shown the other halls of the palace, containing Costa's recently painted frescoes and many fine portraits of his family and friends. The beauty and extent of the gardens and the magnificent view from the Loggia greatly impressed the visitors, as well as the gorgeous dinner service of wrought silver. In the afternoon they saw Cardinal Sigismondo, and visited the Castello, "another fine palace belonging to the Marchesana," writes Soranzo, "more beautiful than all the rest, and full of lovely maidens. We saw the Armoury

of the Marquis, which is worthy to be compared with the Halls of the Council of Ten, and a cabinet containing jewels and plate of priceless value, and the Grotta in which the Marchesa has collected an infinite number of rare and beautiful things." Unfortunately Isabella herself was suffering from an attack of fever and could not receive her guests, but sent orders that they should be courteously entertained and shown all her treasures. Finally, the Venetians were taken to see the stables on the Piazza of the Tè, outside the walls, and admired 150 splendid chargers belonging to Francesco's famous breed of Barbary horses. Then another supper of choicest viands and sweetmeats was set before the tired travellers, after which Marchetto sang certain songs to the lute "so admirably that you could desire nothing better."¹

In the following March, Isabella received a visit from her old friend Trissino, who stopped at Mantua on his way back from a papal mission to Innsbruck, to repay a loan of 400 ducats which the Marchesa had generously advanced some months before. In return for this timely help, the papal nuncio gave the Marchesa valuable information of a secret agreement which had been made between Pope Leo and the Emperor Maximilian. Isabella wrote without delay to warn her brother Alfonso to be prepared for all emergencies, since this treaty between the Pope and Cæsar might be fraught with the gravest peril to his state and person.²

A few weeks later, the Marchesa received another guest in the person of the Milanese sculptor Cristoforo

¹ M. Sanuto, *Diarii*, xxi. 280-282.

² B. Morsolin, *G. G. Trissino*.

Solari, surnamed "il Gobbo," who had carved the beautiful effigies on the tombs of her sister Beatrice and Lodovico Moro. This excellent master now came from Ferrara with a letter of recommendation from Duke Alfonso, begging his sister to show him her paintings and antiquities. Isabella gladly complied with this request, and took occasion of Cristoforo's visit to beg him to undertake a new work. After prolonged delays, the sculptor agreed to design a magnificent fountain for the gardens of her favourite villa of Porto, and promised to carve all the finer reliefs and ornamental details with his own hand, while two assistants were employed to execute the rest of the work. But Cristoforo died of the plague before the fountain was finished, and a long correspondence with his sons ensued. Eventually, after the Marchesa's return from Rome in 1527, the marbles which "il Gobbo" had prepared and the reliefs which he had carved were delivered to his son and another Pavian sculptor of repute, who executed the work from designs left by the dead master.¹

One old friend for whom the Marchesa retained the most profound respect and esteem was Fra Francesco da Ferrara, the distinguished Vicar-General of the Dominican Order. On her journey to Rome in January 1515, she had succeeded in obtaining an edict from Pope Leo X. pronouncing the beatification of their mutual friend, Osanna degli Andreasi; and, as she wrote to the Frate, was determined never to relax her efforts until she could obtain the canonisation "of this our dear mother." Meanwhile she constantly urged Fra Francesco to

¹ A. Bertolotti, *Artisti*, 1885; Luzio, *Arch. St. Lomb.*, 1891, 175.

pay her a visit. Unfortunately, when at length, in May 1516, he came to Mantua, on his way to assume the office of Prior of his Order at Ferrara, Isabella was at Borgoforte, anxiously expecting the arrival of the fugitives from Urbino. But at her wish the good Prior spent a day at Porto, and wrote a letter in which expressions of admiration for her beautiful country house are mingled with regrets at being compelled to leave his beloved books and assume an office that was especially distasteful to his studious nature.

“Your Excellency,” he writes, “may imagine how much pleasure I have in seeing this fair palace of Porto, where, thanks to you, I have been received with the greatest kindness. The palace and gardens are indeed most charming, and seem to me laid out with the greatest skill by Your Highness. But the bitterness of my own thoughts prevents me from fully enjoying these rare delights. I thank Your Highness once more for your kindness in allowing me to see this delicious spot. Another time, when I am in a happier frame of mind, I shall hope to return here and look with greater attention at this house, with its gardens and lovely surroundings. But you know how much I dislike the management of friars, and now, just when I had hoped to return to Milan, I am compelled, in spite of all my protests, to bow my head and go to be Prior at Ferrara.”¹

Another Dominican friar of a very different type, Matteo Bandello, the novelist, was often at Mantua during the last years of Francesco Gonzaga’s reign, and enjoyed the favour of Isabella in a marked degree. As a novice in the Moro’s favourite convent of S.

¹ Luzio e Renier, *Giorn. St. d. Lett. It.*, 1900.

Maria delle Grazie, he had watched Leonardo at work on his great painting in the refectory, and had seen the young Duchess Beatrice borne to the grave amid the tears and lamentations of all Milan. He was a well-known figure in the house of Ippolita Sforza, the wife of Alessandro Bentivoglio, and told stories under the green *pergola* of her garden, or conversed with "these two bright stars of Milanese society, Cecilia Gallerani and Camilla Scarampa." There he met the Marchesa Isabella on her visits to Milan, and was often sent to Mantua with letters from his learned Superior, Prior Francesco. Between 1516 and 1519, Bandello seems to have lived chiefly at the Dominican convent of Mantua, and was admitted into the innermost circle of the Marchesa's friends. The lively friar's wit and brilliancy and his rare gift of story-telling made him a welcome guest at the little dinners and suppers, where Isabella loved to collect poets and humanists on the breezy heights of Cavriana or under the cool shades of Porto. "It was my habit," he writes in the dedication of one of his stories to Pirro Gonzaga of Gazzuolo, "during the summer months when I lived at Mantua, to go two or three times a week to pay my respects to Madama Isabella da Este, Marchesa di Mantova, in her most delightful palace of Porto, and spend the whole day discussing various subjects with her lords and ladies, sometimes before Her Excellency, sometimes among ourselves."¹

There, he tells us, as the company sat in these cool and spacious halls, with the murmur of running waters falling pleasantly on the ear, Madama bade

¹ *Novelle*, pt. i. 30.

him take up Livy and read the story of Tarquin and of the death of Lucrezia. "For she, as you are aware," he says, addressing his beloved pupil, Lucrezia Gonzaga, the daughter of Pirro Gonzaga of Bozzolo, and grand-daughter of Isabella's half-sister, Lucrezia Bentivoglio, "knows the whole of Roman history perfectly. I obeyed her commands, and when I had finished we sat down to dinner, and afterwards discussion arose between M. Benedetto Capilupi and Mario Equicola regarding the subject of the book. M. Benedetto praised Lucrezia highly, but Mario, on the other hand, declared that she must have been mad to kill herself. While these two were still disputing, that noble and learned cavalier, Count Baldassarre Castiglione, suddenly arrived. Madama told him what I had been reading, and the discussion which had arisen, adding gaily that she saw Bandello was on the point of going to the sacristy and referring the disputants to St. Augustine's remarks on the subject in his book of 'City of God.' 'But now you have come,' she added with her gracious smile, 'and are to settle the quarrel. So I beg of you to give your opinion.' Castiglione tried to excuse himself, but the most excellent Madama insisted that he should enter the arena. So he told the whole story, and summed up in praise of the most chaste Lucrezia's act, as you will read in this *Novella*, which I cannot do better than offer to you, knowing that all I write is dear to you, although, as a matter of fact, in this instance I simply relate the story as it was told by the gentle, learned, and eloquent Castiglione."¹ Another evening, when her secretary, Benedetto Capilupi, had told a pleasant tale as the Marchesa

¹ Pt. ii, 21

and her ladies were walking among the cypress and orange groves of the terraced gardens, Madama herself turned to the friar, and said: "Bandello, this story is one which would come in well among the *Novelle* which you are writing every day."¹ Again, one hot July afternoon, when the dog-days had set in and not a breath of air stirred the leaves of the trees, the Marchesa and her ladies retired to take an hour's rest in her rooms on the upper floor. That day Bandello's especial patron, Pirro Gonzaga of Gazzuolo, the youngest of Antonia del Balzo's sons, was at Porto, having been asked by Isabella to meet his cousin, Alessandro, the son of Giovanni Gonzaga, with whom he had been on bad terms, and who was now reconciled to him by the Marchesa's intervention. "Now that Madama has left us," said Pirro, "let us go and seek fresh air in the loggia in the gardens, and pass the time till our Madama returns." The other guests gladly followed his suggestion, and were on their way to the loggia when Alessandro Baesso, Isabella's seneschal or "companion of honour," a man "old in years, but singularly merry in disposition," suddenly arrived from the palace of S. Sebastiano, where he was staying with the Marquis. This very lively and agreeable person, as Bandello calls him, was joyously welcomed by the whole company, and amused them as they sat in the loggia by repeating a story which the Marquis had told him of a Mantuan lady's intrigues with two brothers, until the barking of Madama's pet dogs on the stairs announced her return.

Sometimes the scene changes and we find ourselves on a winter day in the Marchesa's rooms in the

¹ Pt. iv. 3.

Castello. Madama sits by the fire, and Bandello brings her the latest news from Milan, and they talk over the business on which she had sent him. Then the principal courtiers and chief ladies of Mantua drop in one by one to pay their respects to Her Excellency, and Costantino Pio tells the company of a silly wrangle between the Cavaliere Soardo and the doctor Maestro Tommaso. Upon which Isabella starts a discussion on the distinction between wit and folly, between clever nonsense and vulgar jests. Every one has some instance to give, some witty saying or foolish speech to recall, and Bandello wins the prize by relating an epigram made by Marc Antonio Colonna, on the little mule which carried Lautrec and his fortunes. The whole scene gives a curious and animated picture of the society and manners of the age.¹ Elsewhere Bandello repeats the stories which he told the Marquis walking in his gardens at the palace of S. Sebastiano, or in the halls adorned with Mantegna's glorious Triumphs, one day when Luigi Gonzaga of Borgoforte, Tommaso Strozzi, and Madama were all present. In a tale dedicated to Isabella's librarian, Gian Giacomo Calandra, he recalls how, in order to escape from the intense heat caused at Mantua last summer by the drying up of the waters, that glorious lady, Isabella da Este, Marchesa di Mantova, retired to her pleasant country house on the heights of Cavriana, where the air is always fresh and the halls are always cool, and amused herself after her usual custom in reading and conversation, in singing and playing herself, and listening to the most delicious music.² Or, again, we find ourselves at the stately villa of

¹ Pt. i. 48.² Pt. ii. 5.

Marmirolo, in the presence of the Marchesa and the two Duchesses of Urbino, listening to the learned Venetian patrician and librarian of San Marco, Andrea Navagero, the friend of Raphael and Bembo, who, in the presence of this august company, relates the last strange story which has come from Rome.¹ “During these days,” writes Bandello, “that incomparable lady, Elisabetta Gonzaga, the widow of Duke Guidobaldo of blessed memory, being ill, I went to visit her, and found her constant companion and sister-in-law, Madama Emilia Pia, sitting with her. And as we sat together, talking of many things, there arrived that learned and most noble patrician of Vicenza, Gian Giacomo Trissino, bringing a letter from Signora Margherita Pia di San Severino to her sister Emilia. He was most graciously received by the Duchess, and the conversation turned upon the tyranny and cruelty exercised by Cesare Borgia in Romagna and La Marca long ago. As we spoke of these things, the poor Duchess could scarcely restrain her tears, remembering the cruelty of Borgia to one of her ladies, whom he surprised and captured on her wedding journey to Ravenna, slaying her attendants before her eyes. And many more things were said of the enormities committed by the said Cesare Borgia, Duca Valentino, who not only killed his foes and strangers, but slew his own brother. Then Messer Gian Giorgio told us a tale of another cruel tyrant, Eccelino Romano of Verona, which Madonna Emilia begged me to record.”²

To Emilia herself Fra Matteo dedicated a tale which he told at the house of Castiglione, where, in August 1517, his wife, the fair and virtuous lady

¹ Pt. iii. 46.

² Pt. iv. 12.

Ippolita Torelli, gave birth to her first-born son Camillo. Emilia was there that day in waiting on the Duchess Elisabetta, who came with all the noble lords and ladies in Mantua to offer the Count their congratulations on this happy event, but since she had to leave suddenly, she lost part of the story, which Bandello accordingly sends her, knowing her delight in any new tale and the pleasure she has always taken in reading his little things. And in a postscript he adds that a fortnight ago he received a letter from her sister, Margherita di San Severino, who is very well.¹

In another story, told by one of Cardinal Sigismondo's secretaries to Isabella and her guests at Porto, the novelist recalls the rigours of the past winter, when the limpid lake which encircles the city was turned into crystalline ice, and not only the river Mincio, "which flows joyously through our fair meadows," was entirely frozen over, but even the broad waters of the Po were blocked with ice, so that all navigation was stopped, and our "excellent Madama crossed the frozen waters on foot, from Borgoforte to the opposite shore, accompanied by all her gentlemen and most of her lovely maidens." It was indeed a terrible winter. The country was overrun by the Venetian and French troops, who were at war with Maximilian; many towns in Mantuan territory were sacked and burned, and since it was impossible to bring provisions from the farms on the banks of the Po, there was no hay or corn for the horses, and a great famine arose.²

In sharp contrast to these winter scenes is the vivid picture which Bandello gives us of the radiant

¹ Pt. i. 33.

² Pt. i. 16.



[Photo, Front, Mantova,

PONTE SAN GIORGIO.
(Mantova)

[To page 146, vol. II.

Midsummer's day in 1518, when the fair Camilla Gonzaga, the youngest of Antonia del Balzo's daughters, gave her hand in marriage to the great Neapolitan baron, the Marchese Tripalda. The bride herself had written to bid him to the wedding, and her venerable mother had added five lines in her own hand, refusing to accept any excuse. Both her gallant brother, Federico di Bozzolo, the hero of the Urbino wars, and Pirro, his own dear lord, had threatened him with the complete and instant loss of their favour if he did not come. At length, moved by these threats and compelled by the duty which he owed to the noble house of Gonzaga, the friar made his way to Casalmaggiore, Madonna Antonia's fair palace in the district of Cremona, where the marriage took place. Then it was, in the midst of the music and dancing, and the games and tricks of the most comical clowns and buffoons, that Madonna Antonia rose, and beckoning to the bride and her son Pirro to follow her, took Bandello's hand and led him into a hall on the ground-floor, paved with marble and marvellously cool. "I have brought you here," the honoured lady said, with her gracious smile, "not only because of the great heat, but in order to escape from the crowds outside and to spend the noonday hour in pleasant talk. Now! let any one who has a fine story to tell, begin!" All the guests present hailed this as an excellent idea, and Pirro asked a Burgundian gentleman, Edmond Orflec, to begin, and he told a sad story of two faithful lovers doomed to death by a jealous Duchess of Burgundy, which brought tears to all eyes. So the time passed pleasantly away, till the sun began to sink in the western sky and the evening

breeze gently stirred the leaves with its refreshing sound.¹

These Gonzagas of Bozzolo were Bandello's most generous patrons, and Isabella's loyal friends. There was Madonna Antonia herself, who had already seen upwards of seventy years and was yet as young and lively as ever, known and loved as "the mother of all," adored not only by her own large family, but by all the subjects of her little province. And there were her gallant sons, Lodovico, Federico, and Pirro, who were always absent in the wars, but had their palace in Mantua and their finely situated castle of Gazzuolo on the steep banks of the river Oglio. There were her beautiful daughters, most of them already married to Milanese or Mantuan lords, saving this youngest and fairest of all, the bright-eyed Camilla, whose fair young face and divine voice made her so great a favourite with the Marchesa Isabella. And there were her grandchildren growing up around her—Luigi Rodomonte, whose giant stature and heroic mould were celebrated by Ariosto in immortal verse, and his sister Giulia, whose surpassing beauty was soon to become famous throughout Italy. All these find a place in the novelist's pages, all these and many other well-known figures at Isabella's court—the gay maids-of-honour, who, we can well believe, read Bandello's stories very willingly, and all the distinguished humanists to whom Paolo Giovio gave the name of the Accademia di S. Pietro, from the piazza on which the Castello stood. There, to quote Bandello's words, we find the polished and scholarly librarian, Gian Giacomo Calandra, whose name lives in Ariosto's verse;² the learned and industrious

¹ Pt. iv. 5.

² *Orlando Furioso*, xlii. 85.

Mario Equicola, who assisted the Marchesa in her studies; the gentle and cultured Aldo Manuzio; the accomplished poet, Paride da Ceresara, “a man after the heart of Terence, *qui nihil humani a se alienum putat*.” There was the saintly and refined Dominican scholar, Fra Francesco, and the learned philosopher, Pomponazzi, who went by the name of Peretto, and was so Jewish in appearance that he was often hooted and pelted with stones by the street-boys.¹ There was merry Messer Giulio Olduino, too, who told a gay tale in Bandello’s hearing, when he was spending carnival with his mistress at the Duke of Milan’s court, little knowing how soon he was to fall into disgrace, and the novelist, Strascino, who spent a day at Porto on his way to Rome, and repeated Dante’s tale of Pia dei Tolomei. There was the Marquis Francesco, in these last years of his life tied to a sick-bed, but still loving to recall the adventures of his youth and keenly enjoying a rough jest or practical joke; there was his brother Giovanni, “as honest and sensible a man as ever lived,” and his spendthrift son, the gambler and fighter, Alessandro, and many other valiant captains and nobles, Visconti, Pallavicini, Bentivogli, and those gallant San Severini brothers, who claimed the friar’s especial allegiance, as a race of heroes sprung from his own native city of Castelnovo in the Tortonese.²

And among them all, the leader and centre of that brilliant company, was Isabella herself, welcoming the stranger kindly, smiling graciously on the last speaker, suggesting new subjects for discussion, and bringing her own lively wit, her own wide knowledge and wisdom to add to the general store. To

¹ Pt. iii. 38.

² Pt. iv. 3.

her Bandello dedicated his tragic tale of the love and crimes of the Milanese Contessa di Cellani, whom Isabella had formerly met in Ippolita Sforza and Cecilia Gallerani's houses at Milan, and whose conduct she had gravely discussed with Matteo at Porto.¹

Isabella, on her part, felt genuine regard for the lively friar, and valued him not only for his brilliant gifts and genial temper, but for his loyalty and faithfulness. She employed him on errands to Milan and trusted him with difficult and delicate negotiations. On New Year's Day 1517, she sent a Hymn on the Nativity, which Bandello had composed, to Duchess Elisabetta, begging her to accept it, since she had nothing else to give her on this festival, and knows that it will please her as much as anything which she has seen for many a long day.² In April 1518, she gave the friar the following written testimonial, addressed to the Vicar-General of the Dominicans, in which she refutes certain charges which had been brought against Bandello's character and bears witness to the excellence of his conduct during the years which he had spent in the Dominican convent at Mantua.

"To the Vicar and Friars of the Order of Preachers :—

"Reverend Father and Friends in Christ,—
The virtues and excellent qualities of the venerable Friar Matteo Bandello, and the religious and modest life which he has always led in this our city, while he has been in your convent of S. Domenico, are so well known, that we and all persons of worth and good judgment must ever

¹ Pt. i. 7.

² Luzio e Renier in *Giorn. St. d. L.*, v. 34.

praise and commend him. But since we hear that you have received other accounts, which are utterly false, we should fail in our duty if we did not bear witness to the good conduct of the said Friar Matteo, which deserves the highest commendation. We therefore pray you, Reverend Fathers, to dismiss any bad opinions about him which you may have formed, if indeed this is true, which we on our part greatly doubt, and we heartily pray you to hold him dear, and to honour him as his infinite virtues deserve. This will not only be a just and worthy thing in itself, but will give us the greatest pleasure."¹ Mantua, April 15, 1518.

Soon after this curious testimony to his moral character, Bandello went back to Milan, and did not return to Mantua until after the Marquis Francesco's death.

At the request of his friends he composed a Latin oration in memory of this prince, which he sent to his son and successor on the anniversary of Francesco's death, and afterwards delivered before Federico and his whole court. But in the following letter, which he sent to the Marchesa, he showed his discrimination by omitting any allusion to her dead lord's virtues, and contented himself with expressions of sympathy in her loss, and of high hopes for her son's success and prosperity. Isabella herself, we can well believe, cordially shared Bandello's sentiments as to the weariness of reading endless letters of condolence, in which the same exaggerated praises and conventional expressions were reiterated *ad nauseam*.

"Most illustrious and honoured Mistress,—I think

¹ Luzio, *Precettori*, p. 46.

that by this time you will have had so many letters of condolence on the death of your illustrious lord, not only from all parts of Italy, but from the whole of Europe, that you will be quite tired of reading them, besides which every letter of this kind helps to renew our grief and open our wounds afresh. But, as your loyal servant, I am in duty bound, at the risk of seeming indiscreet, to condole with you, which I would do from my heart were I writing to a lady who shared the weakness common to ordinary women. But when I remember that Your Highness, besides being blest with all the excellent gifts and virtues which render her supreme among women, is so rarely endowed by nature that she can find better medicine for this sorrow than a thousand letters can prescribe, I feel I need say no more. Enough that Your Highness knows that I am her servant, and grieve over her sorrows as every faithful servant must grieve for the losses which befall his master. And I cannot fail to add that your sorrow must be diminished by the great expectation that we all entertain of the present illustrious Marquis, your son. For we all hope that he, being what he is, and always has been, and being also governed by Your Highness, must prove worthy of the blood which flows in his veins. May God long preserve Your Highness in health and happiness.—Of Your Illustrious Excellency the most obedient servant, FRA MATTEO BANDELLO.”¹

The clever friar succeeded in retaining the favour of the new Marquis, who rendered him important services at Rome in days to come. And when many years afterwards, in the house of his patron, Fregoso,

¹ Luzio e Renier, *Giorn. St. d. Lett.*, v. 34.

he was entrusted with the education of Pirro and Camilla Gonzaga's orphan daughter, Lucrezia, he often recalled the joyous days which he had spent in Mantua, and caused the memory of the Marchesa and her friends to live again in his immortal pages.

CHAPTER XXX

1519—1520

Death of the Emperor Maximilian—Of the Marquis Francesco Gonzaga—His death-bed and funeral—Proclamation of his son Federico—Death of Lucrezia Borgia—Of Isabella's secretary, Capilupi—Mario Equicola succeeds him—Death of Lorenzo dei Medici, Duke of Urbino—Mission of Castiglione to Rome—Urbino annexed to the Papal States—Raphael designs a tomb for the Marquis Francesco—His picture for Isabella—Portrait of Federico sent to Mantua—Mentioned in Charles the First's inventories—Trial of Longueil—Pandolfo Pico's letter on the death of Raphael.

THE year 1519 proved fatal to many persons closely connected with Isabella d'Este, and whose lives and destinies had influenced the fortunes of her house. First of all, in January the Emperor Maximilian died, and was succeeded in June by his grandson, Charles V., who already reigned over Spain, Naples, and the Netherlands. While the rival powers of Europe were still intriguing over the imperial election, the Marquis Francesco Gonzaga passed away. After Isabella's return from Casale at the end of the year, he became rapidly worse, and was unable to leave the palace of S. Sebastiano. On the morning of the 29th of March, he sent for his notary, Leonello Marchese, and made a will, appointing his son Federico his heir and successor, and leaving a yearly income of 8000 ducats to his two younger sons, Ercole and Ferrante, and a portion of 3000 ducats to his two unmarried daughters. A yearly pension of 400 ducats

was provided for his two illegitimate daughters, and a house in the Borgo Pradella was assigned to Margherita, who still remained unmarried. The Marchesa was confirmed in the possession of all her revenues, amounting to a yearly income of 12,000 ducats, and, together with the Cardinal and Giovanni Gonzaga, was appointed executor and guardian, or adviser of her son Federico until he should attain the age of twenty-two. A fine house and estate was also left to his brother Giovanni as a special token of affection, and a pension of 6000 ducats a year was assigned to the Duke and Duchesses of Urbino during their exile.¹ After this the dying man received the last sacraments, and sent for his wife and children, who assembled round his bedside towards evening. Both the Duchesses of Urbino, his sister and daughter, were present, as well as Isabella, her three sons, and two younger daughters—Ippolita, who had taken the veil eight years before, and Livia, who had been destined to the cloister from her birth, and was already known by her conventual name of Paola. The Marquis took leave of them and of the chief magistrates and nobles of Mantua, begging them to serve his son as well as they had served him. "My dearest son," he said to Federico, "I leave you a beautiful state and a large revenue. See that you act justly and keep the love of your subjects, and carry out my last orders if you wish me to rest in peace." Then, turning to Isabella, he recommended his children to her care, saying that he had long known her marvellous wisdom and capacity, and placed his whole trust and confidence in her. After this he asked two Franciscan friars who were present to read aloud the account of

¹ M. Sanuto, *Diarii*, xxvii. 161.

the death of Christ from St. Luke's Gospel, and when they reached the passage, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit," he commended his own soul devoutly into the hands of God. "Nothing was to be seen on the faces of all present but tears," writes Equicola, who was present; "nothing was to be heard but the sobbing of the women, while the children stood by, as it were, stunned and silent." At eight o'clock the Marquis breathed his last. All the next day his body lay in state in the Castello, after which it was clothed in the Franciscan habit, as he had desired, and borne in an oak coffin covered with a black velvet pall to the Gonzaga chapel in the church of S. Francesco, followed by all the friars in Mantua.¹

On the 4th of April the new Marquis, Federico, rode out of the Castello, clad in white, and, standing under the great gates of the cathedral, received the sceptre from the hands of Sigismondo Folengo, Podestà of Mantua. Then he rode through the city, followed by all the nobles and chief citizens. His steward, Ippoliti, rode before him, bearing a naked sword high over his head, while drums were beat and trumpets sounded, and the people shouted "Long live the house of Gonzaga." A week afterwards the last honours were paid to the dead ruler, and Federico rode in state at the head of all the princes of his house to the church of S. Francesco. Here his father's corpse was laid on a sumptuous catafalque hung with banners and lighted with blazing torches, crowned with an effigy of the dead prince in armour.² Federico's old tutor, Francesco Vigilio, delivered a funeral oration on the following day,

¹ Mario Equicola, *Commentarii*, ed. 1607.

² G. Daïno, *Cronaca*; Volta, *Storia di Mantova*, ii. 304.

after which the new Marquis received the foreign ambassadors and gave audience to the chief citizens of Mantua and the neighbouring towns. During the next weeks the widowed Marchesa received letters and visits of condolence, not only, as Bandello remarked, from all parts of Italy, but from all quarters of the civilised world. Ambassadors from France, Spain, and Germany came to offer her their respectful sympathy. Pope Leo X., who, in spite of his base and treacherous conduct towards Isabella's kindred of Urbino and Ferrara, always professed sincere regard for her, sent his secretary, Pietro Bembo, in June to Mantua to offer his condolences and present his congratulations to Federico; and, at the Marchesa's invitation, this old friend paid her a visit at Marmiolo, where she was spending the summer. Even Cardinal Bibbiena, who could hardly appear in Isabella's presence after taking the field against her son-in-law, sent a courteous note from Brescello on his way back from France, professing the warmest sentiments of affection and regretting his inability to visit her in person.

One of the kindest letters which Isabella received on this occasion was from her sister-in-law, Lucrezia Borgia.¹ Duke Alfonso, alarmed by the Pope's secret designs against Ferrara, had gone to the court of France to seek the help of his ally, King Francis I., and only heard of his brother-in-law's death on his return home. Meanwhile Lucrezia wrote on the 31st of March to express her deep regret at the death of a prince who had always been a good friend to her. "This bitter loss," she wrote to Isabella, "has afflicted me so deeply that, instead of being able to

¹ Gregorovius, "L. Borgia," p. 319.

comfort others, I am in sore need of comfort myself. I grieve from my heart for Your Excellency in this great sorrow, and can never express how much grief it has caused me. But since it has thus pleased God, we must bow to His will, and I know Your Highness will bear this grief with your well-known courage and wisdom." The poor Duchess was herself in a critical state of health. On the 14th of June she gave birth to a dead child, and ten days afterwards she breathed her last in the arms of her husband, on the night of the 24th. Two days before her death, feeling that her last hour was near, she dictated a touching letter to Pope Leo X., begging for his blessing and prayers, and commending her husband and children to his care. Alfonso's grief was deep and real. He had been tenderly attached to this "dear partner of his life," as he called the wife whom he had so reluctantly married, and he fainted away at the funeral, and had to be carried into the sacristy of the church and revived with *aqua vitæ*. Giovanni Gonzaga, who was present, found the whole city plunged in mourning, and heard "wonderful things" of the goodness and piety of the lamented Duchess.¹

Another personal loss which affected Isabella very closely was the death of her faithful secretary, Benedetto Capilupi, who had been her daily companion and assistant ever since her marriage. His health had long been failing, and he died towards the close of 1518, a few months before the Marquis Francesco. The choice of a new secretary was a matter of great importance to the Marchesa, and after long consideration she eventually appointed

¹ Zucchetti, "Lucrezia Borgia," p. 21, &c.; Gregorovius, "L. Borgia," v. 322.

Mario Equicola to the vacant post. "It is especially important," she wrote to her brother Alfonso, on the 23rd of May 1519, "to have a secretary who is agreeable to the Signor Marchese, and as he and all my family are in favour of Mario I have made him my secretary." Both as a refined Latin scholar and a skilled diplomatist, Equicola was especially qualified for the post. And from the time that Federico was a boy in Rome he had ingratiated himself with him by sending him messages from his mother's lively maids-of-honour, especially Alda Boiarda, and that Isabella Lavagnola with whom Mario's own name had been repeatedly associated, much to the Marchesa's displeasure. Certainly the young Marquis honoured Mario with many tokens of his favour, and bestowed several lucrative offices upon him during the first months of his reign. On the whole Equicola served Isabella well, although in the last years of his life, when dissensions arose between Federico and his mother, he had a difficult part to play, and in his anxiety to worship the rising sun, did not always remember the loyalty which he owed to his mistress.

Meanwhile news reached Mantua of the sudden death of the Pope's nephew Lorenzo dei Medici. This weak and dissolute prince expired at Florence on the 4th of May, only a few days after his French wife, Madeleine de la Tour d'Auvergne, leaving an infant princess who afterwards became known in history as Catherine dei Medici. This unexpected event revived the hopes of Francesco Maria, whose restoration to the throne of Urbino was eagerly desired by his old subjects. But Isabella and Federico both felt that their own interests were at stake, and

refused to help the Duke in any rash attempt to recover his throne. The favour of Pope Leo X. was of the utmost importance to the young Marquis, and in order to secure this he and his mother agreed to send Castiglione to Rome to obtain certain concessions from the Pope regarding the salt duties payable by the State to the Holy See, and at the same time plead the cause of the exiled Duke. Leo X., however, was inflexible on this latter point, and, immediately after his nephew's death, the annexation of the duchy of Urbino to the Papal States was proclaimed. On all other matters His Holiness showed himself very favourably disposed towards the young Marquis, and sent Isabella the most gracious messages.

Among the other commissions with which the Marchesa had charged Castiglione on this occasion was that of obtaining a design for her husband's tomb from Michel Angelo or Raphael. The Count naturally applied first of all to his dear friend, and on the 3rd of June, he wrote to inform Isabella of the unexpected success which had attended his application to the great master of Urbino. "As to what Your Excellency writes regarding the drawings for the tomb, I hope that by this time your wish is satisfied, and that you have received Raphael's — to my mind — altogether appropriate design, from the hands of Monsignore Tricarico [Lodovico da Canossa]. Michel Angelo was not in Rome, so there was no one but Raphael to whom I could apply, and I feel sure his drawing will please you."¹ The monument, however, was never erected, and Raphael's sketch has unfortunately disappeared. A

¹ Campori, *Notizie di Raffaello*, &c.

singular fatality has attended all the works which the Urbinate executed for the Gonzagas. We saw how the portrait of Federico was left unfinished at the moment of Julius the Second's death. After the young prince's departure, either Raphael himself or one of his assistants completed the portrait, which was found by Castiglione in the possession of one of Cardinal Colonna's servants, nine months after Raphael's death. "I hear," wrote the Count to his lord on the 1st of January 1521, "that a portrait of Your Excellency, painted by the hand of Raphael, is here in Rome, and belongs to a servant of the Most Reverend Colonna. I have tried to buy it, but the owner will not part from it for anything in the world. I have therefore applied to the said Cardinal, telling him that Your Excellency knows this portrait is in Rome, and has desired me to procure it for you, so I think the Cardinal will manage to make you a present of it."¹ Federico was delighted to hear of Castiglione's discovery, and when, on the 19th of February, the precious portrait reached Mantua, he expressed his warmest thanks to Cardinal Colonna for a gift which was more acceptable to him than anything else in the world. Raphael's portrait is mentioned again in a letter addressed to Federico at the time of his marriage by Ippolito Calandra in October 1531. At that time the ducal apartments in the Castello were being decorated to receive the prince's bride, and among the pictures that were hung under Giulio Romano's direction in one hall, Calandra mentions "the portrait of Your Excellency by Messer Tiziano,

¹ Campori, *op. cit.*, p. 9, &c.

and that which Raphael of Urbino painted of Your Excellency in Rome.”¹

A hundred years later, when Duke Vincenzo II. sold the greater part of his priceless collection to Charles I., we find a small bust-portrait of the first Duke Federico as a boy, in armour, among the entries in the inventory of 1627. The picture certainly came to England, and is correctly described in Van der Doort's catalogue of the pictures at Whitehall and St. James's in 1639, as “The Marquis of Mantua, who by Charles V. was made first Duke of Mantua—5½ inches by 8½ inches. A Head, on panel, of a young man with long locks, wearing a red hat, with a medal.” This, it is clear, was Caradosso's relief of Hercules, which Federico wore when he sat to Raphael for his portrait. At the sale of the royal collection during the Commonwealth, this portrait was described as “A Marquis's Head, by Raphael, and appraised at £200.” According to Passavant, the portrait was bought for Cardinal Richelieu, after whose death it returned to England, and was seen by Dr. Waagen in the Lucy collection at Charlecote Park, Warwickshire. About twenty years ago it was sold to a London dealer, and has not been heard of since.²

When Isabella herself was in Rome, she had, as we have seen,³ asked Raphael to paint a little picture for her studio, and after her return to Mantua, begged Agostino Gonzaga to remind the master of his promise. In June 1515, Agostino replied that

¹ Pungileoni, *Elogio*, p. 182. D'Arco, *op. cit.*, ii. 153.

² Claude Phillips, “The Picture Gallery of Charles I.,” p. 80. Waagen, “Kunstwerke in England,” p. 476; Passavant, *Kunstreise*, p. 156.

³ P. 112.

he had spoken to Raphael, who promised to begin the work shortly. But, knowing by experience how vain these assurances often proved, the Marchesa thought it well to call in Castiglione's help. Accordingly, when the Count came to Mantua that summer, she begged him to use his influence with Raphael on her behalf, and on the 8th of November, he wrote from Urbino to tell her of his efforts in this direction.

“When I left Mantua, Your Excellency desired me to induce Raphael to paint your picture. So I wrote to him directly I reached Urbino, and he replied that he would gladly satisfy your wish. After that I went to Rome and entreated him so earnestly that he promised to put all his other works aside to work for Your Highness. Now he asks me to send the measurements of the picture, and the particulars of the lighting, so that he may set to work without delay. So, if Your Excellency will send me these, I will see to the rest, and only await your orders.”

Isabella replied in the following letter:—

“Dearest and magnificent Knight,—I have not answered your letter of the 8th before, as I was awaiting a trusted messenger. Now I send my horseman, and thank you warmly for your good offices with Raphael of Urbino, and for persuading him to gratify my wish. And for the further execution of this kind service, I send you by my horseman the canvas for the picture, together with the measurements and lighting, which you will forward to Raphael, begging him to begin the work and paint it at his convenience, assuring him, nevertheless, that the sooner he can serve me, the better

pleased I shall be."¹ Mantua, November 30, 1515.

But neither Castiglione's powers of persuasion nor Raphael's affection for his friend could avail anything. When the Count returned to Rome in 1519, the Marchesa's picture was still unfinished, and the Duke of Ferrara's envoy, Paolucci, wrote to his master: "I have been to see M. Baldassarre Castiglione, with whom I spoke of Raphael, and he told me that for a long time past he had been painting a picture for Madama la Marchesana, but was so busy with other things that he only worked at it in his presence. And the Count feels certain that, when he is gone, he will work at it no more!"²

Unfortunately, the Count left Rome in November 1519, and since Raphael died in the following April, we may conclude that Isabella's picture remained unfinished. There is no further mention of the coveted work in her correspondence, or in the inventories of her collection. All we know is that among the "Mantuan pieces" bought by Charles I. there were two pictures bearing the great Urbinate's name. One of these was the Holy Family, known as "La Perla," a picture painted in Raphael's latter days, and chiefly by the hands of assistants, for Lodovico da Canossa, which was afterwards acquired by Duke Vincenzo I. The other was a *quadretto*, described in the inventory of the King's sale as a Little Virgin and Christ, and valued at the high price of £800. Mr. Claude Phillips suggests that this little picture may have been the Vierge de la Maison d'Orléans, now at Chantilly, which was probably the *quadretto*

¹ Luzio, "Federico Gonzaga," p. 68.

² Campori, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

painted for Duke Guidobaldo of Urbino, and may have been given to Isabella by her son-in-law. If, on the contrary, as Campori thinks, the Little Virgin of the Mantuan collection was the picture painted by Raphael for the Marchesa in the last years of his life, it could not have been the Chantilly Madonna, which evidently belongs to an earlier period. But there is a Madonna of the Roman period, only partly the work of Raphael, which may well have been finished after his death by some inferior hand. This is the fascinating picture known as the Rogers Madonna, which was exhibited last winter at Burlington House, and is now the property of Miss Macintosh. Like the Chantilly Madonna, this Virgin and Child belonged to the Orléans collection, and may equally have come to England from Mantua. It is therefore possible that this sadly injured painting, which still retains the matchless charm of Raphael's design, may be the picture on which Castiglione watched the great master at work in the last days of his life, and for which Isabella waited so long in vain.

Castiglione's letters to the Marchesa contain several other allusions to the wonderful works which were crowded into Raphael's last year. In a letter of June 16, he writes: "His Holiness takes more delight in music than ever, and enjoys every variety of his favourite art. He also takes great pleasure in architecture, and is always doing something new in his palace. The latest addition is a loggia, painted and adorned with stuccoes in the antique style. This is the work of Raphael, and is perhaps more beautiful than anything which has been seen in modern times."

In the same letter Castiglione alludes to an event

which had stirred Roman society to its depths. A brilliant Flemish scholar, Christophe Longueil, after winning the highest honours at the University of Paris, came to Rome in the year 1516, and quickly acquired a well-deserved fame in learned circles. Erasmus, Reginald Pole, Bembo, and Sadoletto all numbered him among their friends, and it was proposed to confer the honour of Roman citizenship upon him in recognition of certain orations which he had pronounced in praise of the Eternal City. This proposal excited the jealousy of a strong party in the Roman Academy, who looked coldly on foreign humanists; and a young Roman, of noble birth and high attainments, named Celso Mellini, boldly accused Longueil of high treason, on account of an old oration in which he had formerly ventured to declare that France and Paris were greater than Italy and Rome. The most intense excitement prevailed on both sides, and crowds assembled in the great hall of the Capitol to hear Mellini deliver his Latin oration before the Pope, the Cardinals, and Senators of Rome. The tempest of enthusiasm and rage which the young orator's speech excited is described by Castiglione in his usual lively style.

“A young Fleming, called Longolio,” he writes to Isabella, “lately came to Rome, and is pronounced by all who know him to be a most learned man. It seems that he asked the Conservatori to make him a Roman citizen, and that his request was granted. Afterwards it was discovered that some time ago, when he was very young, he had made an oration in favour of France, in which he condemned many things in Rome, and placed the French above the Romans in all things. Then a young Roman, not

yet twenty years, a son of Mario Mellini, sprang up and delivered a long and eloquent oration in the finest possible manner. He attacked Longolio in the Pope's presence with so much power and pathos that every one wept to hear him describe the calamities which have befallen the city of Rome, and filled the hearts of his hearers with such hatred against the guilty man that every one declared if the Pope had not been present and Longolio had been there, he would have been thrown out of the windows and cut to pieces. And His Holiness himself confessed that he was deeply moved. Now a most eloquent oration is expected from Longolio in his defence, which will be recited before the Pope by another noble Roman youth, for this Longolio has many supporters among the most learned men here, such as Bembo, Sadoletto, Jo. Batt. Casanova, Bishop Porcaro, Capella, and others. So you see that we shall have a whole collection of Latin orations, which I will try and send Your Excellency."¹

Luckily for poor Longueil's safety, he had left Rome secretly before the trial and returned to Paris. An eloquent Latin defence from his pen was afterwards printed by his friends, in which he maintained that he had broken no Roman laws, but was the victim of the envy and hatred of the Roman scholars. Even the Pope, who had been moved to tears by Celso Mellini's speech, confessed that the young Roman might be the more eloquent, but that the Fleming had the better case. Celso, however, was the hero of the hour. The Archdeacon of Mantua spoke of him as another Cicero, and told Equicola how, after the trial, his father, Mario Mellini, enter-

¹ D. Gnoli, *Giudizio*, p. 54.

tained the whole Academy at a banquet at his villa on Monte Mario, while his rival fled from Rome in fear of his life. Celso was taken into the Pope's household and loaded with honours and rewards, and Longueil consoled himself in the company of Erasmus at Louvain.¹ Before long, however, his innocence was triumphantly vindicated; he was offered the Latin chair at Florence by Cardinal Giulio dei Medici, and invited to return to Rome and receive the honours of citizenship. But he preferred to settle at Padua, near his friend Bembo, and died of fever at Venice in 1522. His brilliant rival's career was also prematurely cut short. Only a few months after the famous scene in the Capitol, he was drowned in a swollen torrent as he rode into Rome, from the Pope's villa of La Magliana, on a dark and stormy November night. All the poets at the papal court lamented the ill-fated youth in their verses, and the Pope himself wrote an elegy in his honour. Isabella d'Este, who had taken the deepest interest in the whole of this curious story, alludes to his death in the same letter in which she sorrows over the untimely close of Raphael's life. On that fatal Easter Eve, when Rome was filled with mourning and consternation, one of the Marchesa's many correspondents, Messer Pandolfo Pico della Mirandola, who often sent her news when Castiglione and her other friends were absent, took up his pen and wrote this memorable letter:—

“To the most illustrious and excellent lady, Madama la Marchesana di Mantova. Although, in these holy days, our thoughts should be wholly occupied in confession and devout exercises, I will not fail to pay my duty to Your Excellency. For

¹ V. Cian, *Giorn. St.*, xix. 155.

the moment, I have but one thing to tell you. This is the death of Raphael of Urbino, who passed away last night, that is to say, on the night of Good Friday, leaving this court plunged in the most profound and universal grief for the ruin of those hopes of the greatest things which were expected from him, and which, had he lived to realise them, would have been the glory of this age. And indeed, as every one says, we had a right to expect the greatest things from him, seeing those which he had already accomplished, and the still grander works which he had begun. The heavens have proclaimed this death by one of those signs which marked the death of Christ, when the rocks were opened. *Lapides scissi sunt*. In the same way, the Pope's palace has cracked in such a manner that the building is threatened with ruin, and His Holiness has fled in terror from his rooms and has gone to those built by Pope Innocent VIII. Here we talk of nothing but the death of this great man, who has ended his first life at the age of thirty-three. His second life, that immortal fame which knows neither time nor death, will endure eternally, both by reason of his works and by the labours of the scholars who will write his praises, and who will find in him a never-failing theme. The said Raphael was very honourably buried in the Rotonda, where he had desired a monument to be placed at the cost of 1000 ducats, and had endowed the chapel of his sepulchre with the same amount. He has also left 300 ducats to each of his servants. Yesterday we heard from Florence that Michel Angelo was ill.—Your most faithful servant, PANDOLFO DI PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA.”¹ Rome, April 7, 1520.

¹ Campori, *Notizie di Raffaello*, p. 13.

Isabella replied on the 16th, from Mantua, by the pen of her secretary, Mario Equicola, whose style we recognise in the following note :—

“Messer Pandolfo,—In reply to yours of the 7th, I have nothing to say but that I grieve deeply for the death of Messer Raphael, a man worthy of immortal fame and master of the painter’s art. God has taken from us what He has given to no other, but the laws of Nature are inevitable and Fate has fixed the term of life. Therefore we must be patient. We have heard of the verses written on the premature death of the clever Mellini. If we were to grieve for so gifted a youth as much as his merit deserves, our sorrow would be endless, but to observe moderation in all things and to obey the voice of reason is alone worthy of praise. We would be glad to see those verses. Blessed indeed is he whose death has been celebrated by the Pope! What greater praise could he have, or by what greater personage could he be lamented? Farewell.”¹

¹ Luzio e Renier, *Mantova*, p. 233.

CHAPTER XXXI

1519—1520

Titian visits Mantua—Admires Mantegna's works—Visit of the papal nuncio Chiericati—His letters to Isabella from Spain and England—Description of the court of Henry VIII.—Pilgrimage to Ireland, and strange adventures—The sweating sickness in London—Chiericati helps Isabella to restore friendly relations with Charles V.—Her influence and that of Castiglione at the Vatican—Death of Ippolita Torelli—Letters of the Marchesa and her son to Castiglione—Death of Cardinal Bibbiena.

FIVE months before Raphael died in Rome, Titian paid his first visit to Mantua. In the autumn of 1519, the Venetian master was engaged in painting his great series of Bacchanals for Alfonso d'Este in the Castello of Ferrara, and took advantage of a tournament that was held at the ducal court, to pay a flying visit to Mantua in company with the court painter Dosso Dossi. Isabella was unfortunately absent at Marmiolo, and only heard of Messer Tiziano's visit afterwards from her faithful correspondent Girolamo da Sestola. On the 22nd of November the old music master sent her the following note :—

“Dear and most illustrious Lady,—Some days ago M. Dosso and M. Tiziano, another good master who is making a fine painting here in Ferrara for the Lord Duke, went to Mantua. He saw all Mantegna's works, and praised them greatly to our Signor, and

he also praised your Studios. But, above all, he admired your *Tondo* exceedingly, and calls it the finest thing that he has ever seen. Our Signor has one here, but Titian says that yours is incomparably the finest. I commend myself, as ever, to Your Highness.—Your servant, GIROLAMO DA SESTOLA, called Cholgia.”¹

There can, we think, be little doubt that the *Tondo* which Titian admired so much was Mantegna's famous fresco in the vault of the Sala degli Sposi, with the blue sky above, and the laughing *putti*, the blue-breasted peacock, and women's heads looking over the parapet. This wonderful perspective of Andrea's invention excited the admiration of all the foremost painters of the age, and there was nothing to compare with it either at Mantua or at Ferrara. A painter in Alfonso's service, Ercole Grandi, had, it is true, adopted a similar method in a fresco with which he decorated the roof of a hall at Ferrara, but, as Titian justly pronounced, Mantegna's *Tondo* was far finer, and the Marchesa had good reason to be proud of this unrivalled masterpiece.

Another distinguished stranger who visited Mantua while Isabella was spending the first months of her widowhood in comparative seclusion, was the papal nuncio Francesco Chiericati. Since the days when the Marchesa met the clever Vicentine secretary at Milan during Maximilian Sforza's brief reign, he had risen high in Pope Leo's favour, and had been employed on many important missions. But he never wavered in his loyalty to the Gonzagas, or failed to keep Isabella informed of political events, as well as of the strange experiences and adventures

¹ Luzio in *Emporium*, 1900, p. 431.



[From *Prima, Mantegna*]

FRESCO OF CEILING, SALA DEGLI STORI.

By ANDREA MANTENGA.

[To face p. 172, 180, 181.]

that he met with in distant lands. From Spain he sent her a "Treatise on the History of Castile," which greatly delighted her, when she was spending the summer of 1515 at Porto, and when he went to England as papal nuncio at the close of the year, he wrote a whole series of interesting and amusing letters, in which he describes these unknown regions for her benefit. Chiericati was certainly fortunate in the moment of his visit to our shores. He came to London when, early in the reign of Henry VIII., the young King's accession had inspired all lovers of learning with the highest hopes, in those happy days when his friend Erasmus of Rotterdam declared that the English court contained more persons of real knowledge and ability than any university in Europe. The Italian nuncio could not contain his amazement at the high degree of civilisation and culture which he found in this barbarous land. His letters to Isabella abound in praises of the wonderful King, who could sing and play on all manner of instruments, who was so gallant a rider and fine a soldier, and at the same time governed his land so wisely, and was so generous a friend to scholars—a King indeed, as Erasmus said, who might well bring back the golden age. Chiericati spent Palm Sunday with King Henry, and was charmed with the youthful monarch's genial manners, and deeply impressed with his wisdom in the choice of his minister, the Cardinal of York, who governed the realm with such prudence and sagacity. The fame of the Mantuan court had penetrated even to this far-off corner of the West. Henry told the nuncio there were no horses to equal those which the Marquis had sent him from his stables, and which he always rode on state

occasions, and expressed the greatest satisfaction when he heard that Francesco Gonzaga was training some more for his use. His Highness also set great store on a musician from Brescia, who had been sent to his court with a recommendation from the Marquis, and was desired by the King to wait on His Excellency, when he returned to Italy, and take him Henry's cordial salutations. Both the King and his brother-in-law, the Duke of Suffolk, sent the Marchesa word how gladly they would welcome a visit from one of her sons, and Cardinal Wolsey told Chiericati that, if it pleased Her Excellency to send Federico, or either of his brothers, to England, he would be a father and protector to the young prince. In June 1517, Count Jacques de Luxembourg, accompanied by several Spanish courtiers and prelates, arrived in London on an embassy from Charles V., to invite Henry to join in a new league with him and the Emperor. The nuncio was present at the magnificent reception given to these envoys by the King, who wore a sumptuous robe of cloth of gold, in the Hungarian style, while his nobles were all clad in gold brocade, and wore the finest chains and collars which Chiericati had ever seen. A week of festivities followed; banquets were given by the Cardinal and Lord Mayor, and one day the King invited the ambassadors and the nuncio to dine privately with him in the Queen's rooms. "This, I am told, is a very unusual thing," remarks the writer. "The King himself sang and played all kinds of different instruments with rare talent, and then danced, and made the Count dance, and gave him a fine horse with rich trappings, and a vest of gold brocade trimmed with sables, worth 700 ducats."

“On St. Peter’s Day,” continues Chiericati, “all the ambassadors of the league went to court, and the King heard mass in the Capella Grande below, and wore his royal robes of brocade and ermine, and a train resplendent with jewels, carried by pages.” But the finest sight of all was the tournament held on the Feast of the Translation of St. Thomas of Canterbury, in a *piazza* three times as large as that of S. Pietro of Mantua, surrounded by walls, with tiers of seats occupied by thousands of spectators, with two great pavilions of cloth of gold on either side. The King appeared on horseback in a white damask surcoat, embroidered with his device of roses in rubies and diamonds, with a helmet on his head, and a richly jewelled breastplate valued at 300,000 ducats. He was followed by forty knights on white horses, with bridles and harness of pure silver, worked in *niello* with the King and Queen’s initials and devices, upon which all the goldsmiths in the city had been employed for the last four months. “The Duke of Suffolk [Suforche in the nuncio’s spelling] rode out at the head of a similar troop from the opposite pavilion, and when he met the King in single fight, we seemed to see Hector and Achilles. After this encounter, the King took off his armour and appeared in blue velvet, embroidered with gold bells, attended by twenty-four pages in the same livery, and rode before the Queen on a very tall white horse, prancing and leaping as it went, and when he had tired out one horse, he went back to his tent and mounted another.”¹

The banquet which followed in the Palace of Whitehall was on a magnificent scale; the gold and silver plate piled on the sideboards was worth a

¹ B. Morsolin, *F. Chiericati*, pp. 124–237.

king's ransom, and every variety of meat, poultry, game, and fish was served at table. All the dishes were borne before the King by figures of elephants, panthers, tigers, and other animals, admirably designed; but the finest things in Chiericati's eyes were the jellies made in the shape of castles, towers, churches, and animals of every variety, "as beautiful and closely copied as possible." "To sum up," he adds, "most illustrious Madama, here in England we find all the wealth and delights in the world. Those who call the English barbarians are themselves barbarians! Here we see magnificent costumes, rare virtues, and the finest courtesy. And, best of all, here we have this invincible King, who is endowed with so many excellent virtues that he seems to me to surpass all others who wear a crown in these times. Blessed and happy is the country which is ruled by so worthy and excellent a prince! I would rather live under his mild and gentle sway than enjoy the greatest freedom under any other form of government!"¹

In a postscript to this long letter, dated the 10th of July 1517, the nuncio informs Isabella that the King and Queen are leaving London to spend the summer in the country, and that he and his suite are going to Hibernia to see the Purgatory of St. Patrick and all the other wonderful things in that island, of which he has heard so much, and which he will describe to her on his return. It was many weeks, however, before Chiericati was able to fulfil his promise, and when he did so, he was obliged to confess that the experiences which he had met with in Ireland were hardly those

¹ B. Morsolin, *op. cit.*

which he had expected to find in the Island of the Saints.

“You must know,” he wrote from Middelburg in Zeeland on the 28th of August, “that we left London with letters from the King, and, after travelling five days, reached a city called *Chiustra* [Chester], and crossed the sea in a day and night to *Dublino*, one of the three metropolitan cities of Hibernia. It is full of people and ships, which export salt fish, leather, horses, and cattle, and take back wine and merchandise. Here we were courteously entertained by the Archbishop and the Count of *Childaria* [Kildare], the viceroy of the island, and went on with letters from them to *Dorda* [Drogheda], a city in a pleasant plain, and five miles further to *Doncalch* [Dundalk], once a famous city, but now in ruins. After another day’s journey of twenty-four miles, we reached *Armacana* [Armagh], the seat of the primate, which has an abbey of canons, but is very desolate. Here you find yourself in the midst of savage people, and leaving the sea, begin to enter the hills. Twenty miles further we reached the walled city of *Clochere* [Clogher], which is full of thieves, and twelve miles from that another town called Omagh, also full of thieves. Then we entered Tyrone, a country full of forests, lakes, and swamps, where the dominion of England ceases and a native count reigns. Here are many rivers where, in May and June, pearls are found hidden in the oysters on the rocks. During those two months, clouds of black fog settle on the rivers in the early morning, and when the sun rises they melt into dew, and if by accident a drop falls into an open oyster it congeals into a hard white substance. These are those pearls which are called

Scottish pearls, and the people find so many of them that they drive a thriving trade. Here we reached the banks of a lake [Lough Derg], which is four miles round and has a rocky island in the centre, 20 steps long by 16 wide, which is called the Purgatory of St. Patrick, and is inhabited by three canons. By sounding a horn and waving a white handkerchief on the end of a pole, we summoned one of the canons' two servants, who rowed us one by one across the lake in a rude bark made of a hollow beech-trunk, for which we paid a penny each. Here we landed and found a little oratory, with a hut and tables for the canons. In front of the church door are the three cabins of St. Bridget, St. Patrick, and St. Columba. Behind, towards the east, is the well of St. Patrick, a cave in which the saint is said to have slept. It holds twelve people, and has an iron door; but I did not go inside, fearing to see terrible things. So I remained outside, standing three steps from the door, and the canons went in with two pine torches. I looked at the roof, which is a rock like a mill stone, and when you strike it you hear an echo, and this has given rise to the fables we hear about St. Patrick's well. Two of my companions entered the cave with five other pilgrims, but I think my penance was worse than theirs, as I had to await their return almost ten days! and during that time I consumed the greater part of the victuals we had brought with us. On the day of your arrival you make your will, if you have anything to leave! Then you confess and fast on bread and water for nine days, and visit the three cabins every hour, saying any number of prayers. And you have to stand in the lake, some up to the knees, others half-way up their bodies, and some up to their necks! At

the end of nine days you hear mass, communicate, and are blessed and signed with holy water, and go with the cross before you to the gate of St. Patrick's well. Then you go inside and the door is closed, and not opened until the next day, as you have to stay there twenty-four hours. The rock is pierced on one side and a dish with food is put in through this hole by one of the canons, who stands there and exhorts the pilgrims to be constant and not to be overcome by the temptations of the devil, for it is said that all manner of horrible visions appear to them, and many come out idiots or madmen, because they have yielded to temptation. Of those who entered the cave when I was present, two saw such fearful things that one went out of his mind, and when he was questioned, declared that he had been beaten violently, but by whom he did not know. Another had seen beautiful women, who invited him to eat with them, and offered him fruit and food of all sorts, and these were almost vanquished. The others saw and felt nothing but great cold, hunger, and weakness, and came out half-dead the next day. We revived them as best we could, and their names were written in a book kept in the church, which contains the names of all the pilgrims who go there. The first name I read was that of Guarino da Durazzo, which I thought must be fabulous, but now I have found his journey described in an ancient parchment manuscript. The merit of entering this Purgatory is, they say, that you not only receive plenary indulgence, but that through the grace granted to St. Patrick you will not have to do penance for your sins in another world. We returned by the same road to Armagh, and after visiting the Abbey of

Verdelino [Newry], travelled thirty-four miles further to a city on the sea, called *Don* [Down], where I found a bishop who comes from Viterbo, an old man of 114 years. His church contains the bodies of St. Patrick, St. Bridget, and St. Columba, and here we made a station of three days on our pilgrimage. In this place I could not walk about the streets without being pursued by people, who came running out of their houses to kiss my clothes when they heard that I was the Pope's nuncio, so I was forced to stay at home. Such is the annoyance which arises from over-much religion! But the good old bishop treated me very kindly, and gave me some excellent fishing. Here fish are so plentiful that you can buy a salmon of 50 lbs., which would be worth a great deal in Italy, for a single penny!"

After visiting the stone sepulchre of a giant, 48 feet long, and a spring, sacred to St. Patrick, which possessed miraculous properties, the travellers returned to Dublin, and Chiericati concludes his letter to Isabella with the following summary of his general impressions of Ireland:—

"The Island of Hibernia is beyond Scotland and England, and is a third larger in size. The air is very temperate and warmer than that of England, which is very curious. The King owns about a third part of the sea-coast; the rest of the country belongs to different lords, who are little better than peasants. They call the Pope their king, and stamp the keys and triple tiara on their coins. The Count of *Childaria* is the chief lord, and is a wealthy man and as civilised as an Englishman, and the maritime cities are also civilised. The country is poor, and only produces fish, cattle and chickens. An ox

is worth a ducat, a pair of capons are sold for two-pence. Fish are hardly worth paying for. The people are clever and cunning, and very warlike, and are always quarrelling among themselves. They live on oat-cake, and mostly drink milk or water. The men wear cloth shirts dipped in saffron from head to foot, shoes without stockings, and a grey cloak (*sbernia*) and felt hat, and are closely shaven, excepting on the chin. The women are very white and beautiful, but dirty. They wear the same saffron-coloured shirts, and red caps *à la Carmagnola* on their heads. They are very religious, but do not hold theft to be wrong, saying that it is sinful to have property and fortunes of our own, and that they live in a state of nature, and have all things in common. And for this cause there are so many thieves, and you run great risk of being killed or robbed if you travel without a large escort. In the northern highlands the people, I hear, are still more savage; they go naked, live in caverns, and eat raw meat. This is all I could find out about the Island of Hibernia and the well of St. Patrick, and although it is not of great interest, I send this account to Your Excellency, knowing the inquiring nature of your mind, and that you not only like to hear important things, but to learn the smallest details regarding foreign lands.”¹

On his return to London early in August, the nuncio found a terrible outbreak of the sweating sickness. This mysterious illness attacked some persons quite suddenly, when they were walking and riding or travelling, and killed them in twelve, six, or even four hours. Nothing but corpses were seen lying about the

¹ B. Morsolin, *op. cit.*

streets; many members of the Cardinal's household had fallen ill, and the Venetian ambassador was among the victims. But what grieved him most of all was the death of his dear friend, Ammonio of Lucca, the King's Latin secretary, who was carried off by a sudden attack that week. "Alas!" he wrote to Mantua, "this cruel sickness has robbed me of him in the short space of eight hours, and I am torn with a sorrow and anguish that can find no comfort." Leaving the stricken city, Chiericati hastened to the court of the Catholic King, at Middelburg in Zeeland, and wrote to tell Isabella he hoped soon to return to Italy and pay his respects to her in person. But urgent affairs forced him to travel straight to Rome, whence he was sent in the following spring to Spain, and witnessed the triumphal entry of the young King Charles V. into Barcelona. After sending the Marchesa glowing accounts of the lovely gardens and myrtle and orange bowers of this delicious land, the nuncio went on to the south of France, where he met the Grand Ecuyer, our old friend Galeazzo di Sanseverino, at Montpellier, in April 1519. Later in the summer he was at length able to obtain a brief holiday and visit his friends at Vicenza and Mantua.

The Marchesa welcomed Chiericati warmly, and acquired much valuable information from him, not only concerning his travels in distant lands, but regarding political affairs. He promised to use his influence on behalf of her son, both with his master the Pope, and with the new Emperor, Charles V., who was supposed to look coldly on the young Marquis as an ally of his rival, Francis I. The

nuncio succeeded in renewing friendly relations between the Gonzagas and this powerful monarch, and on his return to Rome, held repeated consultations with Castiglione as to the best means of advancing his master's interests. "After leaving Your Excellency," he wrote to Isabella, on the 28th of September, "I travelled straight to Rome and kissed the feet of the Holy Father. His Beatitude received me lovingly, and tells every one that he will not forget my labours. May God keep them ever before his eyes. I have written to His Catholic Majesty, as well as to Monseigneur de Chièvres and others at court, and told them that I have been at Mantua and found Your Excellency and the Lord Marquis wholly devoted to His Majesty's service, and gave them many excellent reasons for retaining the friendship of your State. I was obliged to write in this strain in order to remove the unfair prejudice which had arisen in His Majesty's mind against Your Excellency and your son. And I said the same to His Majesty's ambassador here. If I go to Spain, I will not fail to let you know. It would be well to use the old cipher, but if it should be lost by any accident, I will take care to provide another."¹

Again, on the 26th of October, Chiericati wrote to give the Marchesa a few details of the treaty between Charles V. and the Pope, begging her to keep her counsel until this alliance is made public, and remarking that she may be glad of a few scraps of news, although she has so able and diligent an envoy as Castiglione at the Vatican. Cardinal Egidio, he also informed Her Excellency, con-

¹ B. Morsolin, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

stantly begged to be remembered to her, and wished her to be assured of his readiness to serve her on all occasions. Fortunately Pope Leo X., in spite of his ambitious designs against Ferrara and enmity to the house of Este, always retained the highest respect for the Marchesa, and when Castiglione returned to Mantua in November, he sent her a Latin letter expressing his unalterable admiration and affection for her person. Undoubtedly the wisdom and diplomacy of Isabella proved of the greatest service to her son and State during these early years of his reign, and we detect the results of her influence at the Vatican in more than one of the political developments which marked the last days of Leo the Tenth's pontificate. The first object on which Isabella had set her heart was the elevation of her son Federico to the post of Captain-General of the Church. The second was the restoration of her younger nephew, Francesco Sforza, to the dukedom which his elder brother had abdicated. Ever since the second conquest of Milan by the French, in 1515, the chief partisans of the Sforzas had taken refuge at the Mantuan court, and, in spite of the Gonzagas' alliance with Francis I., had kept up secret communications with the young Duke of Bari, a brave and spirited prince who won the love of all his brother's old subjects.¹ The hatred in which the French Viceroy, Lautrec, was held throughout Lombardy, revived the hopes of the Sforza party, and, from his exile at Trent, Francesco was only awaiting a favourable opportunity to return and claim his own. From the first, Isabella and her son secretly embraced their kinsman's cause, and

¹ Bandello, *Novelle*, pt. i., p. 28.

their hopes seemed on the eve of fulfilment when, in May 1521, the Pope entered into a secret treaty with Charles V. for the expulsion of the French and the restoration of Francesco Sforza.

In order to further the accomplishment of these designs, Castiglione was again sent to Rome in July 1520. Before the end of the month, he informed Federico that His Holiness had consulted him on the advisability of appointing his master Captain-General of the Church. The Pope further asked him who would govern Mantua in the absence of the Marquis, upon which Castiglione replied that Madama had already shown herself perfectly capable of administering the State. This satisfied His Holiness completely, but he enjoined Castiglione to observe the strictest secrecy and allow no one but Madama and her son to hear of his proposal. In January 1521, the agreement was finally drawn up, to the great joy of Isabella, who saw the fulfilment of her fondest hopes in the appointment of her beloved son to this honourable post at so early an age. A few months later, the news was publicly announced, and excited the greatest rejoicing in Mantua, while both Isabella and Federico loaded Castiglione with their thanks and praises. The Count indeed deserved well of the house of Gonzaga, and his success in public affairs was the more remarkable because of the heavy private losses which he suffered at the time. When he came back to the Vatican in July, he wrote to his mother that he could hardly believe himself to be in Rome without his poor Raphael, and before he had been there a month, his charming young wife Ippolita, whom he had left so reluctantly, died a fortnight after giving birth to her third child.

On the 20th of August, the poor young Countess sent her absent husband this touching little note:—

“My dear Lord,—I have got a little daughter, of which I think you will not be sorry. I have been much worse than I was last time, and have had three attacks of high fever, but to-day I feel better, and hope to have no more trouble. I will not try to write more, lest I overdo myself, but commend myself to you with all my heart.—Your wife who is a little tired out with pain, your IPPOLITA.”¹

Meanwhile the happy father, all unconscious of the impending blow, wrote cheerfully to his mother, rejoicing over his wife's safety and asking if the child's eyes were light or dark, and what name they proposed to give her. When the Count wrote this letter his wife was already dead. On the 24th of August she breathed her last, to the consternation of all her relatives and friends at Mantua. The Marchesa, in her grief and sympathy for Castiglione, sent a courier to Rome with letters to Cardinal Bibbiena, begging him to break the news as gently as possible to the bereaved husband, and then deliver the letters of condolence which she enclosed from herself and her son. “I know,” she wrote, “that it is difficult and almost impossible to put any restraint on the grief which you must feel at the loss of anything so precious to you as your dearest wife, who, as you will have heard, lately passed out of this present world into immortal life. And so we do not ask you not to sorrow, but condole most sincerely with you, and feel ourselves the bitterest distress both for your sake and because of the great love which your late wife had deservedly won from us.”

¹ Serassi, *Lettere fam. di Castiglione*, i.

When the Mantuan courier reached Rome, he found the Count at supper with Cardinal Bibbiena, who only gave him a business letter from Federico, and kept back the others, so that he might at least spend that night in peace. The next morning the Cardinal and some other intimate friends went to the Count's house and broke the news to him. "We told him the sad news as best we could," wrote Bibbiena, "and Your Excellency will understand how great his distress was—so much so, indeed, that not one of us could keep back our tears, and we all wept together for some time."¹

"I never dreamt," Castiglione wrote the next day, "that my poor wife would have to take this journey before me. God have pity on that blessed soul, and may He not leave me here too long after her, for it is very hard to see her die first."

After the first shock was over, the Count bore himself bravely, and devoted his whole energies to public affairs, but, as Bibbiena remarked in a letter to the Marquis, he suffered more than he cared to show, and the memory of the wife whom he had loved so well was never absent from his mind.² Before long a fresh sorrow overtook him in the death of his old and faithful friend, Cardinal Bibbiena, who expired on the 9th of November, only seven months after Raphael. In him Isabella also lamented a gifted friend, who had served her loyally in former days, and who still, in spite of political changes and conflicting interests, professed the most devoted attachment to her person.

¹ Luzio e Renier, *Mantova*, p. 244.

² Serassi, *Lettere fam.*, i. 75, &c.

CHAPTER XXXII

1520—1522

The Court of Mantua under Federico—Visit of the Marquis to Venice—His mistress, Isabella Boschetti—The Marchesa goes to Loreto—The Duke of Urbino forced to leave Mantua—Federico leads the papal troops against the French—Capture of Milan—Retreat of Lautrec—Death of Pope Leo X.—Cardinal Gonzaga aspires to the Papacy—Election of Adrian VI.—Francesco Maria recovers Urbino—Francesco Sforza returns to Milan—Defence of Pavia by Federico, and defeat of the French—Isabella's new apartments in the Corte Vecchia—The *Paradiso*.

THE accession of a young and pleasure-loving prince to the throne produced a marked change in the court of Mantua, and the carnival of 1520 was celebrated with revived gaiety and splendour. On this occasion the chief feature of the festivities was the performance of Cardinal Bibbiena's "Calandria" under the direction of Castiglione,¹ who had superintended the first representation at Urbino seven years before, and who did not leave for Rome until July. In May, the young Marquis and his brother Ercole accompanied the Duke and the two Duchesses of Urbino to Venice for the Ascension fêtes, and were received with great courtesy by the Doge and Senate. Federico stayed with his ambassador in Casa Foscari, and was entertained at a series of splendid banquets, processions of boats, and illuminations, given by the company of young patricians known as the Immortals,

¹ D'Ancona, *Origini del Teatro*, ii, 397.

to which he had been lately admitted. Isabella, however, declined to join the party, and looked coldly on the whole proceeding. For her son insisted on taking with him to Venice his great favourite, Isabella Boschetti, the fair young wife of his kinsman, Francesco Gonzaga, Count of Calvisano ; and his mistress, as Sanuto openly calls her,¹ attended mass with him in S. Marco and appeared at all the fêtes. This is the first mention we find of this lady, whose influence over the young Marquis proved so powerful during the next ten years, and caused his mother so much pain.

In October, the Marchesa herself went on a pilgrimage to Loreto, after paying a visit to Ferrara, where her brother, the warlike Cardinal Ippolito, had lately died, and where Alfonso was himself ill and harassed by the Pope's perpetual intrigues and plots against him. Even Isabella and Castiglione were unable to effect any change in the policy of Leo, who looked on the Duke as his bitter foe, and was bent on the annexation of Ferrara to the Papal States. But at least Castiglione kept Alfonso aware of the Pope's secret designs against him, and his cipher letters to Mantua contain repeated warnings and hints, which Isabella promptly conveyed to her brother.

Neither did Leo the Tenth's resentment against the exiled Duke of Urbino show any signs of abatement. In January 1521, when he offered Federico the post of Captain-General, he insisted that this prince and his family should leave Mantua, and although Isabella was successful in obtaining permission for her daughter and sister-in-law to remain in

¹ *Diarii*, xxviii. 529, &c.

the town, Francesco Maria was driven to take shelter first at Venice and afterwards at Verona. Castiglione meanwhile did his best to obtain more favourable terms for the ducal family, and wrote to assure Duchess Elisabetta of his unchanging loyalty and devotion to her, "remembering," he said, "that the best years of my life were spent in your service." The good Duchess could only reply that she placed her trust in a higher Power and knelt all day in the churches of Mantua, praying God to bless and prosper her nephew's cause.¹

In August, Federico took command of the papal troops and joined the imperialist general, Prospero Colonna, in a successful campaign against Lautrec. On the 19th of November, Milan was seized and the French retired on Cremona, only retaining a garrison in the Castello. The news reached Leo X. at his villa of La Magliana, on the 25th of November, and filled him with joy. Already he formed the wildest schemes for the advancement of his family, and spoke openly of inducing the Emperor to confer the duchy of Milan on Cardinal Medici in the place of Francesco Sforza. But the next day he caught cold out hunting, and showed symptoms of fever. On the 30th, he became seriously ill, and died on the following evening, at the early age of forty-five. There was the usual outcry that the Pope had been poisoned, which Castiglione, who was at La Magliana with him, at one time firmly believed. But there was no ground for the suspicion, and the autopsy of the corpse satisfied the doctors that death was due to natural causes.

This unexpected event excited general consterna-

¹ Martinati, *Notizie intorno di Castiglione*.

tion among the late Pope's friends. Not only had Leo X. left 300,000 ducats of debts, but the pontifical jewels and plate, the tiaras and mitres, even the silver dinner-services of the papal household and the costly Flemish tapestries of the Sistina, were all pawned. "Never," wrote the Venetian envoy, "has a Pope died in worse repute." And Pasquino, as the Mantuan, Alfonso Facino, informed Isabella, was equally merciless. "Like a fox Leo X. rose to power, like a lion he reigned, like a dog he has died," were the words inscribed by some wit on the statue. "If I were to describe the poverty and straits to which the Cardinals' College is reduced," wrote Castiglione, "no one would believe me." At the same time he greatly lamented the Pope's death, and assured Federico that he had lost a true friend. "I do not think Your Excellency quite realises the great loss you have sustained, for, if I am not greatly mistaken, it was His Holiness's wish and intention to exalt you to the highest places. But God has shattered all our vain plans." And he concludes by urging Cardinal Gonzaga to come to Rome as soon as possible, since his arrival may lead to great results.¹

But there were others nearly related to Federico who rejoiced with unfeigned satisfaction at the Pope's death. The Duke of Ferrara hailed the news with joy and struck medals with the motto, *Ex ore Leonis*—"Out of the lion's mouth"—to commemorate his deliverance, and set to work immediately to recover the cities of which the Pope had deprived him. The Duke of Urbino was still more prompt in his action. He was at Maguzano on the Lake of Garda, spending the weary hours of his exile in

¹ Contin, *Castiglione, Lettere diplomatiche*.

enforced idleness, when the news reached him. Without a moment's delay he hurried back to Mantua, raised what troops and money he could get together with the help of the Marchese and the Duke of Ferrara, and hastened to Urbino, "called back," says Guicciardini, "by the love of his subjects."¹ They rose in arms with one accord, drove out the papal governor, and welcomed their old ruler back with shouts of "Feltre! Feltre!" The good news soon reached Mantua, and Elisabetta felt that her best prayers were answered, and mingled her tears of joy with those of Leonora and her mother. On the 18th of December, Isabella was able to congratulate her son-in-law on his triumphant restoration, and a few days later Castiglione wrote to her from Rome: "I hear that the Duke of Urbino has recovered his whole State and entered Pesaro without opposition. God grant that he may remain there long!"²

The Pope's death had the effect of checking hostilities for a time in Lombardy. The papal army melted away, and Federico Gonzaga was forced to advance money for the payment of the small force which he managed to keep together in Milan. Francis I., who had always retained a feeling of friendship for the young Marquis, and had sent him the collar of S. Michel on his accession, took advantage of the difficult position in which he was placed, to invite him to enter his service. Federico courtously declined the offer, but seems to have felt some hesitation, and consulted his mother before breaking off negotiations on the subject. The answer which Isabella sent his secretary, Stazio Gadio, in

¹ *Storia d'Italia*, iii. 223.

² Serassi, *Lettere di Negozi*.

cipher is highly characteristic of her wise and far-seeing policy :—

“I showed our illustrious Madama your cipher despatch,” wrote Equicola, who had followed Federico to the wars, but finding the hardships of the camp little to his taste, had obtained leave to return home. “She had already heard most of its contents from Signor Federico himself, who informed her of the eagerness with which the French are seeking our lord’s alliance. She feels the greatest pleasure in seeing our Signor, her son, so highly esteemed and sought after by so many great powers, which is a clear sign that both his own merits and the importance of his person and State are recognised. But she is strongly of opinion that he should form no new alliance until the creation of the new Pope, because that will best decide our future course of action. Her Excellency hopes that her son may be able to continue in the service of the Church, especially if the Pope is allied with the Emperor, as he has been of late, because the Church will doubtless in the end prove victorious, and, even if defeated, will always be respected, and she considers this alliance to be the safest for this State. Of course, if a new Pope is elected from whom we could not hope for the protection and office which our lord received from Pope Leo, of blessed memory, we must seek for new allies without delay. But Madama certainly thinks that the new Pope, whoever he may be, is sure to esteem the person of your Signor highly, because of his past services and because it has been seen in the past how important the Marquis of Mantua is to the Church. This, Madama tells me, is her opinion, which I send

you, agreeably to the wishes of our Signor, to whose favour I commend myself," &c.¹

When the Marchesa dictated this letter, all eyes were turned to Rome, where the Conclave had already met and the election of the new Pope was hourly expected. On hearing of Leo the Tenth's death, Cardinal Giulio Medici, the late Pope's nephew, and the warlike Swiss prelate, Cardinal Schinner, both left the camp of the League at Milan, and hurried to Rome. Cardinal Gonzaga followed Castiglione's advice and travelled thither as fast as his gouty legs would carry him. Sigismondo, strange as it may seem, was one of the eighteen candidates for the Papacy on this occasion. A shrewd politician and genial man of the world, the Mantuan Cardinal had always been noted for his secular habits. As long ago as 1498, when Lodovico Moro came to Mantua, Capilupi begged Isabella to see that Monsignore, her brother-in-law, shaved his beard and appeared in public in his ecclesiastical habit, or he might create a bad impression. In later years, he was described by the Venetian envoy in Rome, Marino Zorzi, as very fat, a martyr to gout, and particularly fond of eating oysters. Now Pasquino openly mocked at him and called him a babbling fool. But he was popular with his brother cardinals, and Castiglione left no stone unturned to promote his interests. His correspondence with Isabella while the Conclave was sitting shows how anxiously she awaited the result of an election which was fraught with issues of such importance to her house.

"Here," he wrote, "opinions as to who the new Pope will be, differ more than I have ever known.

¹ D'Arco, *Notizie d' Isabella*, p. 86.

God grant things may turn out better than we expect. . . . I have worked day and night in order that Monsignore di Mantova should attain this supreme rank, and I have spoken with all of the Signori in this court, and although I am little skilled in these matters, yet from having had some acquaintance with these lords, I really believe that if I had been present at the Conclave, I might have rendered His Reverence important service. But if it is God's will that he shall be chosen, he will need no help from me. . . . Monsignore dei Medici certainly has many friends, but several among them have proved to be enemies, amongst others Cardinal Colonna. I hear that Signor Prospero has written him a letter, secretly begging him to oppose Cardinal dei Medici with all his might, which seems to me a piece of ingratitude."¹

Never had party spirit run so high, never before had so many different candidates been put forward. "There is marvellous division," wrote the English envoy, John Clerk,² to Cardinal Wolsey, "and we were never likelier to have a schism." And the Imperial Ambassador, Don Juan Manuel,³ informed his master that there could not be so much hatred or as many devils in hell itself, as there were in the Sacred College. Cardinal Medici, whose claims were supported by all the younger Cardinals and the Emperor, was violently opposed by Francis I., who sent the College word that if this "man, who had been the cause of the war, became Pope, he and his whole kingdom would refuse to obey the Church." Henry VIII. tried in vain to obtain Wolsey's elec-

¹ Serassi, *Lettere*, i. 3-5.

² Brewer, *Letters*, iii. pt. ii.

³ Bergenroth *Calendar*, 370.

tion, and when the opposition of the Colonnas rendered Cardinal Medici's prospects hopeless, he and his friends supported Cardinal Farnese. "There was a report yesterday," wrote a Mantuan agent to Isabella, "that Farnese was Pope, and his house was nearly sacked! Several couriers set off with the news, but it turned out to be false, and when his servants were seen in the streets, the mob jeered at them, and cried out, 'Make room for the Pope's servants!'"¹

As the Conclave prolonged its sittings, the popular excitement grew more intense. Party spirit ran high, and bets were freely given and taken on the chances of the different favourites. "To-day," wrote Abbot Lodovico Gonzaga to Federico, "Farnese, who went up 50 per cent. two days ago, has gone down to 18, and our Cardinal has dropped to 13 per cent. My dear lord, I confess I am much afraid of the result. To-day there is great murmuring in Rome, and the Cardinals are threatened with bread and water if they do not make haste."²

When, at length, on the 9th of January, the election of Adrian of Utrecht, Cardinal of Tortosa, the Emperor's former tutor, and now his Viceroy in Spain, was announced, a cry of rage and dismay burst from the Roman mob. "The city," wrote the Venetian, "is full of weeping and curses." *Roma est locanda* was written up on the Vatican. At first it seemed almost impossible to believe that a "barbarian," whose name was almost unknown, and who was not even present at the Conclave, should be elected Pope. The Cardinals themselves could not explain

¹ Luzio, *Giorn. St. d. Lett. It.*, xix. 83.

² *Ibid.*

their action, and slunk home, ashamed and dejected, amid the hisses and jeers of the crowd. Alone among his comrades Cardinal Gonzaga preserved his composure, and smilingly thanked the mob for being content with curses, and not revenging their wrongs with stones! And the same evening he addressed the following letter to Isabella:—

“To-day these excellent Cardinals and myself have at length come out of the Conclave, where we have spent a fortnight in the greatest discomfort and fatigue, both of body and mind, owing to our endless quarrels. And after all this, we have—no doubt according to the will of God, since all is ordered by Him—elected a Pope who is, as people say, a holy man. I, for one, have never seen him. As for my own disappointment, I did my best, and cannot complain that any of these Cardinals deceived me. Only this unexpected event, which was never dreamt of by me or any one else, has shattered my hopes. Just when I felt sure of reaching the desired end, the greater part of the Cardinals went and gave their votes to this man, simply as a means of throwing them away, without knowing what the others were doing, and when all the votes were read out, he was found to have no less than fifteen! My plans have not succeeded. No! and I cannot pretend that I am not very much disappointed; but at least I have realised the esteem in which I am held by my colleagues, and must hope for better luck another time.”¹

Federico, as Captain-General of the Church, received the news of Adrian VI.'s election on the same day, both from Don Juan Manuel, who, with

¹ Luzio, *op. cit.*, xix. 83.

all the Imperial party, rejoiced at the election of their master's nominee, and from the disappointed candidate, Cardinal Medici, who wrote a hurried note to the Marquis as he left the Conclave, giving the new Pope's name without any comment. The last-named prelate was anxious to keep up the same friendly relations with the Gonzagas as before, and Isabella on her part lost no opportunity of strengthening her son's position. Castiglione succeeded in obtaining Federico's confirmation in his office from the new Pope, and Adrian's surrender of the duchy of Urbino to its rightful lord. And when, in February 1522, Cardinal Medici sent a confidential envoy from Florence to the Emperor, he spent a night at Mantua, and was closeted with Madama la Marchesana during more than two hours.¹ The Venetian ambassador reported that the said envoy, Giovanni Matteo dei Medici, was sent by the Cardinal to arrange the terms of the agreement between Florence and the Duke of Urbino, and to propose a marriage between Francesco Maria's little son Guidobaldo and Caterina, the infant daughter of his old rival, Lorenzo dei Medici. In the same interview, he adds, Madama eloquently pleaded the cause of her brother the Duke of Ferrara, and her nephew the Duke of Milan, and desired the Florentine envoy to lay her requests before the Emperor. The result of these negotiations soon appeared in the arrival of Francesco Sforza at Mantua. Although the young Duke's chancellor Morone had taken possession of Milan in his name, he himself had been detained at Trent for lack of money and troops to fight his way through the Swiss mercenaries in the pay of the

¹ M. Sanuto, *Diarii*, xxxii. 457.

French king, and it was only in March that he was strong enough to descend into Italy. On the 12th of March, Castiglione wrote from Rome to the Marchesa, complaining that every one had letters from Her Excellency but himself, and that he felt very unhappy, since Madama had not written for a thousand years! "God grant," he exclaims, "that your secretaries may be a little more diligent in future!" "I rejoice exceedingly," he goes on, "to hear that the Signor Marchese is soon to escort the Duke of Milan to his home, which is here held for certain." And in a postscript he adds that a messenger has just arrived who had seen the Signor Duca himself in Mantua. "God send us soon news that the French are beaten, and that the Signor Duca is not only at Mantua, but in Milan!"¹

A few days later he heard that the Marquis, at the head of 300 men, had escorted his cousin to Pavia, and that Francesco Sforza had entered Milan between Prospero Colonna and Antonio de Leyva, the Captains of the League, and had been received with incredible joy and love by his father's old subjects. Lautrec now concentrated all his forces on Pavia, which was valiantly defended by Federico Gonzaga, who successfully repulsed a determined assault of the French, and, in spite of the small number of his force and the lack of artillery, compelled them to retire to Monza. On the 27th of April, a decisive battle took place between Lautrec's army and the forces of the League under Prospero Colonna and the Duke of Milan, in which the combined French and Swiss troops were completely defeated. After this, Lautrec retreated across the

¹ Serassi, *op. cit.*

Alps, and Cremona and the Castello of Milan were the only fortresses which remained in the hands of King Francis. Federico acquired great fame by his brilliant feats of arms, and was welcomed with great rejoicing on his return to Mantua after this victorious campaign. Isabella received congratulations from all sides, and could not contain her pride and joy in her son's triumph.

"I will only send a brief reply to Your Excellency's letter to-day," wrote Castiglione, "for I think you must be so proud and happy that you can hardly care to read my letters, or those of any one else, and that with good reason, since, as you write, you have never seen the Signor Marchese look as handsome as he does now, and it is certain that you have never before seen him so glorious and renowned. If His Excellency wins as much fame in the next ten years of his life as he has done in the last ten months, the world will hardly be able to contain his glory. Never have I heard a youth in ancient or modern times praised as he is to-day. God grant others may follow in his steps, and then not only Mantua, but all Italy will have much to glory in!"¹

Fortune seemed indeed just then to smile on Isabella, and her dearest hopes were crowned with success. In May the Duchesses of Urbino returned to Urbino. Leonora's young son Guidobaldo was left at Mantua as a hostage in his uncle's hands, and began to learn Latin and to read Virgil under his grandmother's watchful eye. For a time peace was restored to the ill-fated Milanese, and Isabella saw with joy how her nephew endeared himself to his subjects. Although little of her correspondence

¹ Serassi, *op. cit.*

with Francesco Sforza has been preserved, the young Duke remained on affectionate terms with his aunt, as we see by the following letter, which he wrote in reply to her urgent request that he would endeavour to make his uncle Alfonso's peace with the Emperor:—

“Most Illustrious Lady, my honoured Aunt and Mother,—The other day I received a letter from Your Excellency which gave me the greatest pleasure, only I was quite sorry to see that it was written by your own hand, for you ought really not to take so much trouble for me, seeing I am always satisfied with your signature. Since then Grossino has given me Your Excellency's message, and I am exceedingly glad to hear how much you desire to see your illustrious brother, my honoured lord and uncle, reconciled with His Cæsarean Majesty, and to learn that you wish me to do my best, in order that His Majesty may accept the Duke as his loyal servant and receive him into favour. Your Excellency knows how much reverence and affection I bear to you, and may rest assured that during the last days I have done my utmost in this quarter, and have exerted myself as vigorously as if it had been on behalf of my own person and State. I wrote both to the Viceroy and to His Majesty, as well as to those particular friends of mine at his court, who are persons of great influence, and will, I know, do their best, and I feel sure that the Lord Duke's quarrel will be made up with His Majesty, and through him with His Holiness. If I had not desired this already on my own account, the sense of Your Excellency's great anxiety on the subject would be enough to make me promise on my honour to do my utmost both with His Cæsarean Majesty and in the other quarter.

But this is both my duty and my inclination, and I desire the settlement of the Lord Duke's affairs as sincerely as that of my own. I remember who my father and mother were, and desire the good of the house of Este as much as I care for the prosperity of the house of Sforza. Could I ever wish that State should belong to the Church and the name of that house be extinct? Certainly not. My mother, of blessed memory, was, I know well, your sister, and I am not ashamed, but very proud, as I may well be, of having had such a mother. Grossino tells me that Your Excellency begs me to put away and forget any disagreement there may have been in the past between the Duke and myself. But there has never been anything of the kind which could make me wish for his ruin. It is no doubt true that I wish His Excellency would become the servant of the Emperor and not of the King of France; but whether this, which I hope to see ere long, be the case or not, I assure you that His Excellency is as much the master of my State as of Ferrara, and that I honour him with the respect of a son for his father and lord. Your Excellency knows that I am ever your obedient nephew, son, and servant, and I humbly commend myself to you.—FRANCESCO, DUKE OF MILAN.”¹
Pavia, August 12, 1520.

On a subsequent occasion, when the Marchesa had an unfortunate difference with her son, who had thrown one of her confidential servants, Leonello Marchese, the lawyer who had made her husband's will, into prison to gratify his mistress, Isabella Boschetti, she sent the novelist, Matteo Bandello, to entreat the Duke of Milan to use his influence

¹ Luzio, *Archivio St. Lombardo*, 1901, p. 170.

with his cousin on behalf of the innocent man. Francesco promptly complied with her request, and sent the wisest and most able jurist at Milan, Benedetto Tonso, back with Bandello to Mantua to ask for Marchese's release.¹

In after years Isabella herself was able to render her nephew important services and help him to recover the Emperor's favour at a critical moment. For the present, however, Italy enjoyed a brief interval of peace, and Isabella was once more able to put political affairs aside and turn her attention to pleasanter subjects. One of these was the decoration of her new apartments in the Corte Vecchia. A year after her husband's death, Isabella, who had long felt cramped in the small rooms of the Castello, obtained her son's consent to move into the Corte Vecchia, where she already kept her library and works of art in the Grotta on the ground floor. Federico on his part was glad to occupy the Castello himself, and in October 1520 he addressed the following letter to his cousins, the sons of Gianfrancesco and Antonia del Balzo. These three princes—Lodovico, who after his wife's death took orders and became known as the Abate Gonzaga; Federico of Bozzolo, the gallant captain in the service of Francis I.; and Pirro, the lord of Gazzuolo—had hitherto been allowed the use of a palace in Mantua, close to the Castello. This house the Marquis now asked them to give up to the Duke and Duchesses of Urbino, in order to leave the Corte Vecchia free for his mother's use. "As you may already know, our illustrious mother has for several months past wished to lodge for the future in the Corte Vecchia, both for her convenience and for

¹ Bandello, *Novelle*, pt. ii. 56.

our own, and has had the rooms in this building repaired and altered after her own taste in the best and most suitable manner. One thing, however, which is of great importance, still remains to be settled. That is to provide rooms for the illustrious Duke and Duchesses, our honoured brother-in-law, nephew, aunt, and sister, because it is impossible that all of these different households should occupy the same palace as that of the said Madama, our mother, without inconveniencing each other. After much consultation on the subject, Madama and we ourselves feel that the only place suitable for the said Duke and Duchesses is the palace which Your Highness occupies in the Piazza di Mantova, together with your illustrious brothers, to whom I am writing the same thing. And since we desire the comfort of Madama, our mother, above all else, and are far more anxious for this than for our own convenience, we pray Your Highness to have the goodness to give up the said palace."

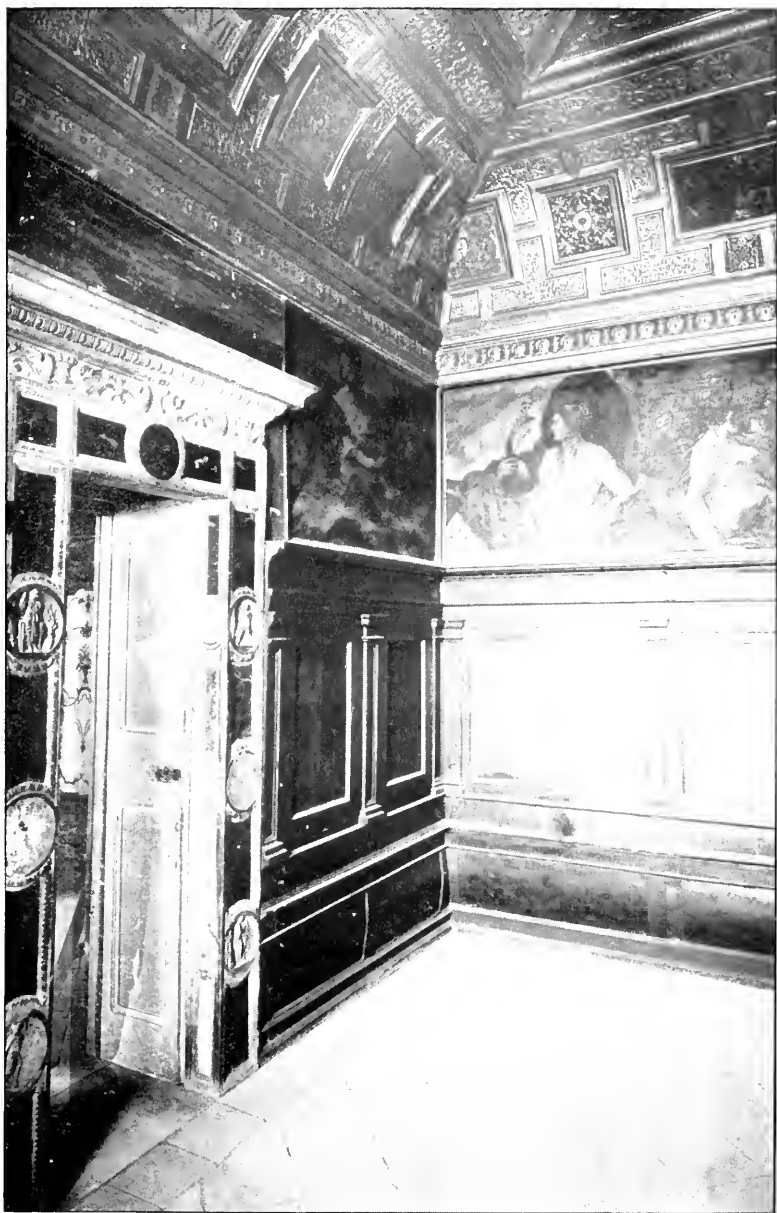
A splendid suite of sixteen rooms for the Marchesa's use was accordingly prepared by the architect Viani and the Mantuan painter Leombruno in the Corte Vecchia. To-day only the so-called *Scalcheria* retains any remains of the original decoration. Here Leombruno, who had been sent to Rome to study the works of Raphael and Michel Angelo under Castiglione's direction, by his employers, painted a series of hunting scenes on the walls, and adorned the ceiling with a fresco in imitation of Mantegna's Sala degli Sposi. But on the frieze of the *cortile* or garden court opening from the Grotta, above the delicately carved Ionic pillars and niches, adorned with marble mosaics, which held Isabella's choicest

antiques, we may still read the following inscription :
“*Isabella Estensis, regum Aragonum neptis, ducum Ferrariæ filia et soror, Marchiorum Gonzagarum conjux et mater, fecit anno a partu Virginis, MDXXII.*”
From this we learn the exact date of these additions to the Grotta, which were evidently completed in 1522. To the same period we may ascribe the beautiful suite of Camerini on the upper floor of the same building, known as the *Paradiso*, from the lovely views which it commands over the terraced gardens and wide lakes. These four little rooms which Isabella kept for her private use still retain much of their original decoration—the finely carved wood-work, the azure and gilding of the ceiling, the delicately inlaid panelling of the walls, and the doors of richly coloured marbles. Here, between *intarsiatura* views of cities and palaces, we recognise her favourite devices and mottoes, the musical notes and rests, and the words *Nec spe nec metu*, which supplied Equicola with a subject for his treatise, the altar supporting a lyre, the candelabra with the letters U.T.S., which Paolo Giovio interprets as *Unum sufficit in tenebris*, and the Lotto cards with the mystic number XXVII., *vinti sette*, signifying that she had vanquished all her foes—which motto, adds the Bishop of Nocera, “seems allowable in so great a princess.”¹ Here we see the white marble door adorned with medallions of antique myths, of Orpheus and Athene and Calliope, by the hand of the great sculptor Cristoforo Romano, which was brought here from the Marchesa’s Studio in the Castello, as well as another marble door of later workmanship, which was probably executed by the Venetian Tullio Lombardo in 1523. And here

¹ Paolo Giovio, *Delle Imprese*, p. 59.

too we may still find Isabella's name, repeated at intervals upon the panelled frieze, and remember that the peaceful days of her declining years were spent in these sunny little rooms looking over the bright waters to Virgil's birthplace, and the green meadows through which the Mincio flows to join the Po.¹ The decoration of these new apartments occupied a large share of Isabella's time and thoughts in these years. We find her writing to Rome and Venice for marbles, asking her agents to send her antique busts and bas-reliefs, and collecting works of art with all her old energy. Castiglione, as usual, was one of her chief assistants, and his letters from Rome were by no means exclusively devoted to State affairs. One day he sends her a full account of the carnival fêtes and comedies at the Vatican, cold and lifeless as he confesses them to have seemed to him this year; another, he collects the latest and most scurrilous verses of Pasquino for her benefit, or tells her how Bandello's friend, the witty story-teller, Strascino, has been amusing His Holiness with his comic recitations, and is promptly desired to send him to Mantua for the next carnival. At one time he tells her of a relief which Caradosso, *questo mala-*

¹ Some years ago, a model of Isabella d'Este's Studio in this apartment of the *Paradiso*, designed by the well-known French writer M. Charles Yriarte, was placed in the Italian Court in the South Kensington Museum. The decorations of the walls and ceiling are carefully reproduced, but M. Yriarte was mistaken in supposing that the fine tempera paintings by Mantegna, Costa and Perugino ever adorned these Camerini. These pictures were originally executed for Isabella's Studio of the Grotta on the ground floor of the Corte Vecchia, and remained there, as we know from inventories and documents published by D'Arco (*Arte e Artefici*, ii.), until after the sack of Mantua in 1630.



[Photo, Premi. Mutua.

PARADISO. CASTELLO DI MANTOVA.

[To face p. 206, vol. ii.

detto vecchio, promised him long ago, but has not yet finished. "I go to see him every day, and he works at the design all the while, and says he wishes to make it as beautiful as possible, because it is the last that he will ever do in his life, and he is so old, this may well be the case."¹ Another day he describes a wonderful alabaster organ, a most excellent work, which he has succeeded in buying for 600 ducats, and hopes to send her if it is possible to find a sufficient number of mules to convey the precious instrument to Mantua. But he must take care to elude the custom-house officers of Rome, who are the greatest rogues in the world, and ask no less than 200 ducats! "If I can manage this," he remarks, "I think I shall have worked a miracle!" But the Count was indefatigable where his mistress's pleasure was concerned, and by the end of August 1522, the different portions of the organ were loaded on the backs of ten mules, and sent to Mantua, in the charge of the "master of organs" who had made the instrument. We do not hear if the papal officials exacted the whole of their 200 ducats, or if Castiglione was able to obtain an exemption in the Marchesa's favour, but the alabaster organ reached Mantua safely, and was placed in the Studio of the Grotta.²

All through that year the works in the Castello were in progress, and while the Marquis was absent in Lombardy, Mario Equicola wrote daily reports of the latest improvements that had been effected. "These splendid rooms with all their pictures make me feel," he writes in February 1522, "as if I were living in the days when the Romans raised those monu-

¹ Luzio, *Nuova Antologia*, 1896, p. 308.

² Bertolotti, *Artisti*, &c.

ments which are the wonders of the world ! In Your Excellency's bedroom are four *tondi*, and one large panel where Fame might be represented between War, Victory, Virtue, and Hope. In the Camera della Fede your portrait might be hung with representations of ancient heroes who have kept faith. . . ." As for the stables (always an important part of the Mantuan palace), they are so fine that he wishes he were a horse to live there ! and suggests that Virgil's line should be written over the doors : "*Hinc bellator equus campo sese arduus infert.*"¹

¹ Luzio, *Giorn. St. d. Lett.*, 1900, p. 15.

CHAPTER XXXIII

1522—1525

Ercole Gonzaga—Isabella tries to obtain his elevation to the Cardinalate — Consults Castiglione and Trissino as to the choice of a tutor—Sends Ercole to Bologna—He attends Pomponazzi's lectures—The great sceptic—His "Treatise on Immortality" burnt at Venice—Ercole's life at college—M. Lazzaro his teacher—Death of Pietro Pomponazzi—Veneration of Ercole Gonzaga for his memory.

WHILE Isabella lavished her tenderest affections on her eldest son, Federico, she did not neglect her younger children. She was especially anxious to give her second son, Ercole, who was destined for the Church, and already showed a genuine taste for letters, the best possible education. At fifteen Ercole was consecrated Bishop, and appointed co-adjutor to his uncle, Cardinal Sigismondo. But his mother's ambition soared still higher, and in the last months of Leo the Tenth's life, she made great efforts to obtain a Cardinal's hat for the youthful prelate. Several letters on the subject passed between her and Castiglione, and only a week before the Pope's death the Marchesa renewed her request, and desired the Count to inform His Holiness that she had decided to send Ercole to complete his studies at the University of Bologna. The sudden close of Leo the Tenth's life put an end to these hopes. Not only was there already one Cardinal in the Gonzaga family, but among the reforms

agreed upon by the Sacred College before the opening of the Conclave there was an express stipulation that no Cardinal was to be elected who was under thirty. For the present, therefore, Isabella devoted her attention to her son's studies, and begged Castiglione to find him a tutor in Rome. The Count promised to do his best. "As regards the choice of a tutor for Signor Ercole," he wrote, "I will do as you wish, and hope the tutor will not be so distinguished that the pupil will not be able to prove himself worthy of him!" But his attempts proved unsuccessful, and he had to leave the task to other friends.

"I hope next to hear that Signor Ercole has been well provided with a tutor," he wrote in May 1522, when Federico's triumphs were the subject of general congratulation. "I know how near to Your Excellency's heart this wish lies, and I confidently expect this will add to the praise of his illustrious brother, from whom I hope still greater things. May God prosper these princes as they deserve!"¹

The Marchesa next applied to her old friend Trissino on the subject. The Vicentine humanist had risen high in the favour of both Pope and Emperor of late years, and had been employed by Leo X. on several delicate missions. But he retained his old devotion for Isabella, and in December 1521, sent her a *canzone* which he had composed, in Petrarch's style, in her honour, saying that as it was the custom of the Greeks to offer the first-fruits of their genius to the gods, so he inscribed this *canzone*, which was the first-fruits of his Muse, to her as

¹ Serassi, *Lettere di Negozi*.

the goddess of the age. In these verses the poet celebrated the charms of the Marchesa, and sang of her golden hair, her dark eyebrows and bright eyes, the lilies and roses of her complexion, and the exquisite sweetness of her voice, with a flattery which Isabella herself recognised to be excessive. "Dearest friend," she wrote in answer, "we have read the learned and elegant *canzone* in which it pleases you to honour us by praising us much more than is convenient, but since this is a licence allowed to poets—among whom you are foremost in the present age—who are permitted to soar beyond the limits of their subject, we do not reject your compliments, but thank you exceedingly for the *canzone*, and for repeating your old promise to send us some more of your poetical compositions. And we wish your Muse all the ease, peace and tranquillity that are needful for her future welfare."

In the following July, when Ercole's future was still undecided, the Marchesa begged Trissino to come to Mantua, not only that she might enjoy the pleasure of his conversation, but that he might give her the benefit of his advice. "One of our sons, Ercole," she continues, "shows great intelligence and takes much pleasure in study, and what pleases us especially, and we take to be a good sign, is that he delights in the conversation of scholars. We should like you to talk to him of books, and give us a faithful report of the judgment which you form of his abilities, and tell us if it seems to you he is in the right way to attain to some degree of perfection in letters, which ought not to be difficult for one of his studious and docile nature. In this we should like to have your advice,

which will, we know, be as wise as it is kind. But, as we said before, we do not wish to cause you any inconvenience, and although we ask you to visit us now, we hope you will choose your own time, as the matter is not so urgent that it will not brook a few weeks' delay. But we should be glad if you could send us word when you hope to be able to come, so that we may know when to expect you."¹

Trissino came to Mantua in October, and during his visit the Marchesa decided to carry out her original intention, and send her son to complete his studies at Bologna. The chief reason which prompted this determination was the presence of the famous scholar, Pietro Pomponazzi, commonly known among his pupils as Maestro Peretto, at this university. A native of Mantua, Pomponazzi had grown up under the shadow of the Gonzaga princes, and owed much of his success to their protection. In 1488, the Marquis Francesco had recommended him to the Signory of Venice for the chair of philosophy at Padua, and when that university was closed during the wars of the League of Cambray, he obtained a similar post at Ferrara through the Marchesa's influence. Since 1512, he had filled the chair of philosophy at Bologna, where his lectures attained a world-wide reputation. Here four years later he wrote his famous "Treatise on the Immortality of the Soul," in which he boldly declared that the truth of this doctrine was incapable of logical proof, and had never been maintained by Aristotle. This startling assertion aroused much debate in ecclesiastical circles, and Pomponazzi's treatise was publicly burnt by the Franciscans

¹ B. Morsolin, *op. cit.*

in Venice. But the great teacher had powerful friends at the Vatican in the persons of Cardinal Bibbiena and Bembo, and after the publication of an *Apologia*, in which he explained his meaning and submitted himself to the Church, the clamour gradually died away. This *Apologia*, which appeared in 1518, was dedicated to Cardinal Gonzaga, and Isabella now gave a fresh proof of her confidence in the master by committing her son to his charge. On the 8th of December 1522, she wrote to Pomponazzi as follows: "Dear and honoured Master,—Our beloved son, the Reverend and Illustrious Signor Ercole, is coming to study at Bologna, and although we know that you will not fail to give him faithful counsel and guidance, so that he may attain to that perfection which he seeks, and which we supremely desire for him, yet as a good mother we cannot fail to commend him to you ourselves, and assure you that the good offices which you show him shall be most gratefully acknowledged by us." ¹

Three days afterwards, Ercole arrived at Bologna, and wrote to his mother the next day, with all a boy's delight, to tell her of the kindly reception he had met with, and how much pleased he was with the excellent rooms which her loving care had provided.

"Most excellent and illustrious Lady and dearest Mother,—On my arrival yesterday, a great cavalcade rode out to meet me about eight miles from Bologna. First came my cousin, Pirro Gonzaga [the son of Lodovico of Gazzuolo and Francesca de' Fieschi], with sixty other scholars, mostly of Mantuan birth, on horse-

¹ Luzio in *Giorn. Stor.*, viii. 374, &c.

back. These dismounted, and Pirro and I embraced each other tenderly. A little further we met a troop of Bolognese gentlemen, who all rejoiced at my coming; and yet further on came my dear Maestro Pietro himself, with a number of learned doctors, who had ridden some way out of the town to meet me. So I entered Bologna about four o'clock with a train of 200 horsemen, and the streets and gateways were crowded with men, and women stood at all the windows crying out 'Gonzaga!' When I reached my house I saw that its owner, Aliprando, had decorated the doorway with festoons of evergreens and shields bearing the arms of our house, of the Pope, and of the governor and people of Bologna. After taking leave of these gentlemen, I got off my horse and visited my rooms, which pleased me immensely. First of all you enter a beautiful little *salotto*, hung with the tapestries which I had sent on, as well as several pictures in frames, which look very well, and containing a bed hung with crimson damask embroidered with various devices. From this room you enter a smaller one, also hung with tapestry, and containing two couches, one draped with cloth of gold, the other covered with linen. Within, there is a third room, with a couch hung with crimson velvet and cloth of gold, which I will use as a study. Certainly these lodgings are most excellent, and all my servants are quite satisfied, and indeed the house is as good and comfortable as possible. Last night my cousin Pirro and some of our Mantuan scholars supped with me. I kiss your hands reverently.—Your son, ERCOLE.”¹

The next day Ercole arranged his books, called

¹ Luzio, *op. cit.*

on M. Pietro, and was introduced to the beadle and lecturers of the university. The following morning he went on foot to pay his respects to the governor, who took him to mass at S. Salvatore, and on his return found a deputation from the citizens awaiting him with a splendid gift of *confetti*, wax candles, game, corn, and salt meat, as well as a calf and some pheasants and partridges, which M. Pietro himself had sent the young prince. "I cannot tell Your Excellency," wrote Vincenzo de' Preti, the Mantuan tutor, who had accompanied Ercole to Bologna, "what numbers of trumpeters and *pifferari* surround the house, or how many visits my lord has received to-day from the Rector of the College and other gentlemen and scholars. Not only the halls, but the loggia and courtyard were crowded with visitors all day. It was only towards evening that Ercole was able to escape from his callers and ride out to visit the Church of S. Michele in Bosco on the hillside, and which seemed to him a most pleasant and delightful place." Meanwhile, Archdeacon Gabbioneta had, by Isabella's desire, consulted Pomponazzi as to the choice of a tutor for her son, and Vincenzo informed her that he strongly recommended M. Lazzaro Buonamici of Bassano, an able and learned teacher who was acquainted with Castiglione and Mario Equicola. But the honest servant was considerably perturbed to find that this tutor's fee would be 170 ducats—that is to say, 20 ducats more than the Marchesa wished to give. Isabella, however, knew better than to haggle over prices in this case, and wrote back promptly, saying: "As to your arrangement with Messer Lazzaro, it seems to me that so excellent a man, and one who will help our

son as much as you say, is not to be lost for the sake of so paltry a sum as 20 or 30 ducats, and I hope you will do your best to secure his services." So Messer Lazzaro was duly engaged, and replied in an eloquent Latin epistle to the Marchesa's urgent request that he would lead her son to the glorious goal which he had set before him.

Then work began in good earnest. M. Lazzaro read Cicero and Aristotle every afternoon with Ercole in his own house, and in the evenings he attended M. Pietro's lectures. On the first occasion on which the prince appeared at a public lecture, Pomponazzi made a little speech, exhorting him to persevere in the right way, and speaking of his mother as *Sanctissima Mater tua, Isabella*, in terms which moved many of his hearers to tears! The good Mantuan tutor, De' Preti, was greatly edified at the sight of his charge's new fervour. "*Madama mia*," he wrote, "Signor Ercole shows a far greater zeal for learning and devotion to study than he ever showed at Mantua. He does not merely listen to M. Peretto, he adores him; so, if God gives him grace to go on as he has begun, it is certain that he will become a famous man of letters. On my part I did my duty, as a faithful servant, by telling him that he must persevere in his studies here at Bologna, as those do who enter the religious life, and thus gain immortal fame both in this world and in the next. Upon which he replied that I might be quite sure he would not return to Your Excellency an ignorant man. . . . And every one here says that they have never seen a more zealous scholar. God keep him ever in the same excellent disposition!"¹

¹ Luzio, *op. cit.*

A week later De' Preti reports: "To-day M. Lazzaro began to read Tully with Signor Ercole, and has fixed one o'clock as the most convenient hour for his lesson, which also suits my lord, who intends to devote the mornings to philosophy. Every day Messer Pietro comes about four to fetch my lord, and takes him to the Studio, where he resides, and his lecture to-day was on the 'Meteora' of Aristotle, and a very delightful one it was. Signor Ercole shows the greatest courtesy both to M. Pietro and M. Lazzaro, and Your Excellency cannot think how good and charming he is to every one."

From the first the great teacher seems to have fascinated Ercole with the glamour of his personality. A man of short stature and square build, with an enormous head and closely-shaven face, M. Peretto's appearance often excited ridicule, and Bandello tells us how, when he came to deliver an oration at Modena, certain ladies of fashion, meeting this ugly little man with a bald head and shabby clothes, took him for a German Jew, and called him Maestro Abram.¹ But when he began to lecture, his whole being underwent a strange transformation. His eyes glowed with fire, his countenance shone with enthusiasm, and his eloquent and impassioned words stirred the hearts of his audience with irresistible might. He had the power of imparting interest to the dullest subject, and his lively and caustic wit, as well as his frequent allusions to contemporary events and personages, added greatly to his popularity as a lecturer. Isabella herself felt doubly rewarded for the pains which she had taken with her son's education when M. Peretto himself

¹ *Novelle*, pt. iii. 38.

wrote to tell her how industriously Ercole applied himself to his studies, and how much beloved he was both by his teachers and comrades, "which things," as she said in her reply, "are the pleasures and fruits which every loving mother desires and all good children yield." And she begged M. Pietro to keep watch over the boy, so that she might feel as satisfied as if she herself were at his side. Both Ercole's teachers were able to give his mother excellent reports of his progress during the next term. Pomponazzi wrote to her after Christmas: "M. Lazzaro reads every day with Signor Ercole, and I have asked his opinion of this Signor several times. He commends him highly, and thinks that he will do very well in Greek and Latin. He finds him eager to learn, and tells me that he has an excellent nature, and is full of kindness and goodness, and certainly he appears so to me and to all who know him in this town." Later on, Vincenzo wrote: "Work goes on gaily both morning and night. M. Lazzaro has great hopes of my lord, and M. Pietro approves of his beginnings, and is quite satisfied with what he hears from Gianfrancesco Forno, who is well versed in humanism." Forno was a young Modenese of noble birth, a favourite pupil of M. Peretto, who was appointed to read with Ercole and who afterwards accompanied him to Mantua in the vacation.

Even at Bologna, however, students had their amusements, and Vincenzo's daily reports show that the young lord's time was not wholly consumed in arduous studies. One morning he rides out early to see the charming house of the Benedictines at the Madonna del Monte; another evening he sups with

a gay party of fellow-students, whose riotous mirth sometimes leads to serious consequences. On one occasion a Mantuan friend of Ercole, who shared his studies and board, quarrelled with a Modenese youth and wounded him mortally, upon which the prince sent him away. At Christmas the *feste* were celebrated with all manner of entertainments, laurel wreaths were hung on Ercole's door, and at the end of lectures the college beadle recited comic verses in his honour amid great merriment. When the week's vacation was over, Ercole and his cousin Pirro attended an anatomical course, and, together with many painters and sculptors, were present at the dissection of the corpse of a thief who had been hung.

Like other young men at college, Ercole often found himself short of funds, and, although he was never as extravagant in his expenditure as his brothers, his tutor more than once had recourse to his mother, begging her to send him money by the next courier, since he was reduced to his last penny!

An attack of ague interrupted his studies that winter, and, by his doctor's advice, he only worked in the morning for some time. After carnival he resolved to make up for lost time. He attended lectures on logic, read Cicero's Letters, and composed Latin epistles for M. Lazzaro, often working late into the night. So diligent was the young prince that his master allowed him to pay a flying visit to Mantua at Easter, after which he remained at Bologna until the August vacation, which lasted three months. Isabella had every reason to be satisfied with her son's progress, and, at Pomponazzi's recommendation, Ercole was granted a dispensation from the daily recital of the breviary, in order to have more time

for his classical studies. He also began to read Arabic with Forno, and engaged an Arab servant to help him acquire the language.¹ His teachers all found him a docile and intelligent scholar, and Lazzaro, who afterwards became professor of Greek at Padua, remained all his life on friendly terms with his old pupil. But Pomponazzi inspired him with a still deeper feeling, and the death of the great teacher, on the 18th of May 1525, was a heavy blow to him.

The philosopher had long suffered from internal complications, which caused him acute pain at times, and in the end reduced him to a state of complete nervous prostration. In his suffering, he refused to take food, saying it was better to die once for all than to endure such continual agony. His pupil, Antonio Broccardo, the poet whose mournful and romantic features live for us in Giorgione's portrait, wrote a private letter to his father, giving a memorable account of the great sceptic's last moments. "On the seventh night of his fatal illness, when his end was hourly expected, he was heard to say, 'I depart with joy.' 'Where are you going?' asked a friend who stood at his bedside, eager to learn the master's secret. 'Where all mortals go,' was Pomponazzi's reply. 'Whither do they go?' urged the former speaker. 'Where others are gone before,' replied the dying man. A last attempt was made to induce him to take nourishment, but he refused, saying, 'Leave me alone. I wish to die.' And so," writes his sorrowful pupil, "his spirit fled with a sigh to the shades."²

¹ Luzio, *op. cit.*

² V. Cian, *Nuovi documenti su Pomponazzi*, p. 29.

Ercole was bitterly grieved, and sent the sad news to his brother the Marquis in the following short note : “ I have nothing to tell you, but that last night about three o’clock our beloved M. Pietro Pomponazzi died. May God grant him peace ! ”¹ On the 24th of May, Federico replied : “ We received the news which you gave us of the excellent Messer Pietro Pomponazzi’s death with no little sorrow, both because of the love which we bore him on account of his rare talents, and out of regard for Your Highness, knowing how much you loved him, and how useful he was to you in those studies which are your constant delight. We feel sure that you grieve for him from the depths of your heart.”²

After Messer Peretto’s death, the young prince felt that he could no longer remain at Bologna, and wrote to his mother, who was then in Rome, saying that he was returning to Mantua now that M. Pietro was no more, and begged her to allow him to spend the summer at her villa of Porto, since the heat would be so great in the town.

Pomponazzi’s remains were brought to his native city and buried in the church of San Francesco, where Ercole raised a noble bronze monument above his remains. To the end of his life Isabella’s son retained the deepest affection for his master’s memory ; he sealed his letters with an effigy of Pomponazzi, and had a portrait of him which he describes as a “ most speaking likeness.” When, in 1545, Paolo Giovio begged for a copy of this portrait to add to his collection, the Cardinal replied that he could not spare the original, since this would leave him without

¹ Davari, *Lettere inedite di Pomponazzi*.

² Fontana, *Sull’ Immortalità*, &c., p. 93.

the image of the great man who had been his master, and regretted to say that Maestro Giulio (Giulio Romano) was too much occupied with buildings and plans to do the work, but promised that one of his scholars should copy the portrait as soon as he returned from Rome.¹ It is worthy of note that Ercole Gonzaga, who still remembered the great sceptic with so much veneration, was before long to become the president of the General Council which met at Trent in that same year.

¹ Luzio in *Giorn. Stor.*, 1900, p. 45.

CHAPTER XXXIV

1523—1525

Castiglione in Rome—Pope Adrian's reforms—Chiericati at the Diet of Nürnberg—His letters to Isabella—Journey of Magellan—Visit of Isabella to Venice—Navagero and Titian—Doge Andrea Gritti enters into an alliance with Charles V.—The Pope joins the League—Death of Adrian VI.—Election of Clement VII.—Castiglione sent to Rome—Wars of Lombardy—The Connétable de Bourbon at Mantua—Isabella in Venice—Ferrante Gonzaga goes to Spain—Castiglione sent by the Pope to Madrid—Giulio Romano at Mantua—Isabella Boschetti.

CASTIGLIONE'S embassy to the Vatican was prolonged until November 1522. Owing to his exertions, Federico Gonzaga was confirmed in his post of Captain-General, and in this capacity held the baldachino over the new Pope when His Holiness entered Rome in state on the 30th of August 1522. But although Adrian VI. showed himself friendly to the Gonzagas and their kinsfolk of Urbino and Ferrara, and was sincerely desirous of peace, his foreign habits and the changes which he introduced soon rendered him unpopular, alike to the officials of Leo the Tenth's court and to the people of Rome. He turned out the Cardinals who lodged in the Vatican, ordered them to shave their beards and lay aside their secular habits, engaged an old Flemish cook, and gave his steward a single ducat a day for the expenses of his household. The carnival was

shorn of its splendour; even Pasquino was silenced, and would have been thrown into the Tiber if the Pope could have had his way. Castiglione sighed over these changes, and was heartily sick of his mission. To add to his discontent, the plague raged in Rome all through the autumn, and he longed to escape from the stricken city, where he was in daily risk of losing his life. He succeeded, however, in maintaining his influence with Adrian VI., and had a powerful helper at the Vatican in Isabella's old friend, Bishop Chiericati.

This excellent prelate stood high in the Pope's favour, and was sent as papal nuncio to the Diet of Nürnberg, in the hope that he would be able to effect a reconciliation with the German Lutherans. Erasmus rejoiced to hear of the noble mission on which his friend was bound, and Chiericati himself had great hopes of success when he passed through Mantua in November 1522. But the letters which he addressed to Isabella from Nürnberg show that the task was beyond his powers, and that neither the Pope nor any of his advisers as yet realised the proportions which the Lutheran movement had assumed.

"I assure Your Excellency," he writes in January, "that Luther's doctrine has already so many roots in the earth that a thousand persons could not pull it up; certainly I alone cannot. But I will do what little I can, although threats and persecution are not wanting. Every day I receive villainous insults, but I try and take all these things patiently for the love of God, knowing that they will be counted to me as martyrdom. . . . Now they have begun to preach that the Sacrament of the Altar is

not a true Sacrament, and is not to be worshipped, but only celebrated in memory of Christ. And they say that the Blessed Virgin has no merit as the Mother of Christ, and that she bore other sons to Joseph. And every day things go from bad to worse. I pray God to put forth His hand." Again, he tells Isabella how much he is distressed at the secular spirit of the clergy, and how German cardinals and archbishops are to be seen dancing and leaping in their ecclesiastical habits. And then, knowing that theological controversies have never deeply interested the Marchesa, he passes on to pleasanter subjects, and tells her some of the wonderful tales which his Vicentine servant, Antonio Pigafetti, who had left him three years before, to sail round the world with Magellan, has brought back from these unknown lands.

"I send Your Excellency an account of the Spanish expedition and a plan of the great city of Temistan, in the newly discovered islands of the Oceanic Sea, which will, I think, be of interest to you. And I hope that in a few days Your Excellency may have the great pleasure of hearing my servant, who has just returned from this journey round the world, tell you himself all the great and marvellous things which he has seen and described in writing. For certainly this journey is a greater one than any man has ever taken before, since he and his comrades went round the whole of the globe. First of all, they sailed southwards to those islands in the Oceanic Sea which are called *Terra Ferma*, and round the point, over the Sea of Sur towards the west. Then turning to the north and east, they found themselves in the great Gulf, near the Spice Islands, and sailed

by the golden Chersonese and the Gangelian Gulf, through the Persian and Arabian Seas, by the Cape of Good Hope, into the Ethiopian Sea and across the Atlantic, until they reached the Canary Islands, and returned to their own land by the opposite way, having gained not only great riches, but what is worth more—immortality. For surely this has thrown all the deeds of the Argonauts into the shade. Here we have a long account of the expedition, which His Cæsarean Majesty has sent to the Archduke Ferdinand, who has kindly shown it to me, and has also given me some of the spices which they brought from these parts, with boughs and leaves of the tree from which they are made. Cæsar has also sent His Serene Highness a painted map of the journey, and a bird which is very beautiful, which the kings of those countries bear with them when they go to battle, and say they cannot die as long as it is at their side. It seems to be a very rare bird, and here they call it a phoenix; *et de his satis*.”¹

A few weeks later, Chiericati sent the Marchesa Pigafetti's Itinerary, and on the 3rd of February 1523, Isabella wrote to thank him for the book and to express the incredible satisfaction which it had afforded her. “If your servant,” she continues, “who has returned so full of knowledge from these parts, and whom indeed we envy greatly, should happen to come this way, we shall be delighted to see him, for, as you will understand, it is a far greater pleasure to hear of these new and marvellous lands from a living person, than merely to read about them. So if you can send him to Mantua, we shall be deeply indebted to you.” At

¹ B. Morsolin, *op. cit.*

the same time she congratulated him on his success in persuading the German princes to take arms against the Turk, and condoled with him over the difficulties which he encountered at Nürnberg. "May our Lord God give you the power necessary to extinguish that shameful and diabolical Lutheran sect. You must not allow yourself to be disheartened by the insults and opposition that you receive, remembering that it is the same in all important undertakings, and the greater your difficulties are, the greater will be your glory."

The nuncio kept his promise, and Antonio Pigafetti came to Mantua soon afterwards, bringing with him the journal which he had kept daily on his voyage, and which Chiericati described as a "divine thing." The traveller met with the most enthusiastic reception, and the Marchesa was able to listen to his wonderful stories, and satisfy her curiosity as to the countries and natives of this strange new world which had been discovered in her own lifetime. In the last days of this same month of January 1523, the painter Titian came to Mantua at the urgent request of Federico, who had probably met him in Venice, and was familiar with his works at Ferrara. The young Marquis was especially anxious that the Venetian master should paint a portrait for him, probably that of his mistress, Isabella Boschetti, since the name of the sitter is never given in the letters which he wrote on the subject. But Titian was on his way to Ferrara to superintend the hanging of his great Bacchanals in Duke Alfonso's Camerino, and had already sent the last of the series, the Bacchus and Ariadne of the National Gallery, by boat to that city. So he only spent a few days at Mantua, and the portrait, which

he probably sketched during this brief visit, was finished at Venice in the following August. The work was pronounced to be very fine, and greatly pleased the Marquis, who sent Titian a splendid doublet, in token of his satisfaction, before the picture ever reached him.¹ The painter's great Entombment of the Louvre was also executed and sent to Mantua towards the end of the year, and was sold to our Charles I. with the gems of the Mantuan collection in the following century, but it is uncertain whether this noble work was painted for Federico or his mother. In any case, Isabella, who had been absent when Titian paid his first visit to Mantua and admired her art-treasures, four years before, now made the acquaintance of the master, with whom she and her son were afterwards so intimately associated.

A few months later, she saw him again in Venice, when, after visiting Padua, in fulfilment of a vow which she had made to the Santo, she spent Ascension-tide in that city. "To-day," wrote Marino Sanuto on the 20th of May, "the Signory heard from the Mantuan ambassador that the old Marchesana was in this city, lodging in Ca' Barbaro in S. Stefano, and a present of ducats was sent her by order of the Signory."² On this occasion Isabella was accompanied by her brother, Duke Alfonso, now set free from the perpetual fear of papal intrigues and treacheries, and by Castiglione, who had at length returned from Rome and was able to enjoy a well-earned holiday. This joyous little party started for Venice on the 16th of May, travelling *incognito*, and, as usual on these occasions, Isabella went everywhere and saw

¹ Crowe e Cavalcaselle, *Titian*, vol. i. App.

² M. Sanuto, *Diarii*, xxxiv. 156.

everything. Her companions confessed themselves tired out by her marvellous energy, and the Count describes himself in a letter to Federico as very busy, *occupatissimo*, in escorting Madama on her walks and gondola trips through the city.¹

Twenty-one years had passed since Isabella paid her memorable visit to Venice with her sister-in-law, Duchess Elisabetta, and there were many new and beautiful things for her to see in the churches and palaces of the lagoons—the glorious frescoes which adorned the Great Council Hall, the last and noblest altar-pieces of Giovanni Bellini, that master whose endless delays had caused her so much annoyance, the paintings of Carpaccio in the little shrine of the Slavonian sailors, and the famous pictures by Giorgione, which she had vainly sought to obtain for her Grotta. Now the great patriarch of Venetian painting and the brilliant master of Castelfranco were both in their graves, and a new generation of masters had sprung up, with Titian at their head. The Marchesa, no doubt, visited the church of S. Maria Gloriosa and saw the Assumption which he had lately painted for the Franciscan friars, and examined his latest frescoes in the ducal palace. And she was especially struck by a St. Jerome which she saw in his shop, and wrote to the Mantuan envoy, Malatesta, after her return in June, desiring him to offer the painter 100 ducats for the picture. The librarian of S. Marco, Andrea Navagero, the friend of Raphael and Castiglione, who often visited the Marchesa at Mantua and made himself very useful to her in Venice, had, it appears, praised the picture greatly, and his advice encouraged

¹ *Esenzioni di famiglia di Castiglione*, p. 30.

her to make the purchase, "knowing," she writes to Malatesta, "that I cannot be wrong in acting on the advice of one who is so excellent a judge in these things." And she begs her agent to thank Messer Andrea for his kind interest in the matter, and for all the trouble which he has taken to secure the picture. Unluckily Isabella, finding herself as usual short of money, afterwards changed her mind, much to the distress of Malatesta, who privately told Ippolito Calandra that, if Her Excellency did not buy the picture, it would hardly be to her honour, especially now that he had spoken to Navagero and Titian on the subject.¹ The Marchesa, however, would not have the St. Jerome, but either this picture or another version of the subject was bought by her son Federico in the year of his marriage, and hung in the room of his wife, Duchess Margherita.²

While Isabella and her brother visited churches and studios, or studied rare books and manuscripts, with Castiglione and Navagero for their guides, political affairs were not neglected. Andrea Gritti had just succeeded the aged Antonio Grimani on the ducal throne, and both the Duke and the Marchesa were present at his proclamation and enthronement, after which Alfonso shook hands with the newly elected Doge, and wished him joy, in the most friendly manner. The next morning they attended the solemn mass in S. Marco when the banner of the Republic was formally delivered into his hands, and saw him crowned with the ducal cap at the top of the Giants' Staircase.³

¹ Luzio in *Giorn. Stor.*, 1900, p. 48.

² D'Arco, *Arte e Artefici*, ii. 161.

³ M. Sanuto, *Diarii*, xxxiv. 157, 158.

On his accession, the new Doge was called upon to make a momentous decision in accepting the proposals of Charles V. and Francesco Sforza to join in a league for the defence of the Milanese against the Signory's old ally, France. Castiglione accordingly lost no time in waiting upon His Serene Highness, with whom he had a long interview on the 30th of May, and who professed the warmest sentiments of friendship for the Marquis Federico. Nor did the Count forget to put in a word in favour of his old master, the Duke of Urbino, whom he was always glad to serve. The result proved highly satisfactory, and when, on the 28th of June, the new treaty of the Republic with the Emperor was proclaimed, Francesco Maria was appointed general of the Venetian army. The Gonzagas had now entered into a close alliance with the Emperor, Charles V., and in July 1523, a few weeks after his return from Venice, Castiglione wrote to his friend, Andrea Piperario, in Rome, begging him to assure the Spanish ambassador that neither the bad conduct of the Pope nor that of the Duke of Milan could prevent the Marquis from being wholly devoted to the Emperor (*Imperialissimo*) both in body and soul. "Madama, his mother," the Count goes on, "is entirely of the same opinion, and if there were any need for me to keep them in this frame of mind, I would not only gladly give my time and labour, but life itself."¹ On the 3rd of August, Pope Adrian and the Republic of Florence both joined the league for the defence of Italy against the French, and the Marquis of Mantua, who was already Captain of the Church, received the command of the troops

¹ Serassi, *Lettere di Neg.*, ii. 55.

which Florence sent to join the papal forces. In spite of this formidable league, Francis I. was bent on recovering Milan, and early in September a strong force under Bonnivet crossed the Alps, and, after taking Novara and Vigevano, laid siege to Milan.

On the 14th of September 1523, the very day when the French crossed the Ticino, the Pope died, heart-broken at the failure of his efforts to reform the Church, and to unite the powers of Christendom in a crusade against the Turks. "Here lies Adrian VI., who thought nothing more unfortunate in his life than that he became Pope," was, Paolo Giovio tells us, the inscription which he wished to have placed on his grave. The Conclave met on the 1st of October, and after a prolonged sitting of fifty days, Cardinal dei Medici was elected Pope, with the title of Clement VII. The Imperialists were exultant. Bembo prophesied that the new Pope would prove the best and wisest ruler which the Church had ever known, and all Rome rejoiced at the choice of a Medici, who would hold a splendid court and bring back the golden days of Leo X. The Gonzagas were overjoyed to see a friend of their house once more in the Chair of St. Peter, and Castiglione, who was on intimate terms with the new Pontiff, was immediately sent to congratulate him on his election.

That summer Isabella and her family were once more thrown into mourning by the death of her brother-in-law Giovanni Gonzaga and his wife Laura Bentivoglio, who both died in the same week, the one in the last days of August, the other on the 4th of September. Giovanni had always shown himself the most loyal of subjects to his brother and nephew, and his house in the Borgo Pradella had been the scene of many

pleasant family gatherings. The loss of this honest and genial prince was deeply regretted by Isabella, and even more by Duchess Elisabetta, who was tenderly attached to her youngest brother, and had little in common with his sons. The eldest, Alessandro, was chiefly notorious for his quarrelsome temper and inveterate love of gambling, and wasted both his time and patrimony at cards. Three months later, Isabella received a visit from another of her husband's nephews, who was a very different character, and whose misfortunes aroused her deepest sympathy. This was the famous Connétable de Bourbon, the only surviving son of Chiara Gonzaga and Gilbert de Montpensier. The young French nobleman had succeeded to the vast estates of the Bourbon family through his marriage with Susanne, only child of Charles the Eighth's sister Anne, but after his wife's death the Queen-mother, Louise de Savoie, laid claim to these lands, and by her intrigues drove Charles de Bourbon from the French court. The Emperor received him with open arms, and offered him the command of the German forces in Lombardy, where he found himself fighting against his liege lord in the very city over which he had once reigned as Viceroy. On her visit to Louis the Twelfth's court at Milan, many years before, Isabella had been greatly attracted by the young prince, who bore a marked likeness to his mother, and now she told his aunt Elisabetta that she could not express how charming and handsome he was, and how nobly and cheerfully he bore his misfortunes. Monsignore de Bourbon, as his Italian relatives called him, accompanied Federico to the camp of the League, and exerted himself actively in opposing the French attack on Milan. By the

end of the year, Bonnivet was forced to raise the siege, and Lannoy, the new Viceroy of Naples, who took the command of the combined forces in March, soon compelled him to retire beyond the Alps. The papal forces were disbanded, and Federico Gonzaga returned to Mantua early in May.

Once more Italy enjoyed a brief interval of repose, and Isabella availed herself of the opportunity to repeat her visit to Venice. On the 8th of May, Marino Sanuto mentions the arrival of the "Marchesa di Mantova, mother of the Lord Marquis, and sister of the Duke of Ferrara, commonly called Madama, who is lodging in Casa Barbaro, near S. Vitale, with the Mantuan ambassador, and has brought with her, for the use of her household, four *amphoræ* and three barrels of wine, twenty sacks of flour, four cheeses, besides meat and vegetables, all of which were declared free of duty by the Signoria."¹ Isabella paid a visit to the Doge Andrea Gritti, who gave her a splendid reception, and entertained her in his private rooms, where she spent some time, talking freely of many things, and especially of the latest news from Turkey. Every courtesy was shown to the Marchesa on this occasion, and when the Mantuan envoy came to thank the Signoria for their courtesy, and express how greatly she had enjoyed her visit, the Doge replied in the most cordial terms, and spoke of the Marquis as a beloved son and faithful ally.

Isabella remained in Venice for the Ascension fêtes, and attended high mass on the Feast of Corpus Christi in S. Marco, when the Patriarch sang the office, the Doge in his crimson robes, and all the

¹ M. Sanuto, *Diarii*, xxxvi. 366.

members of the Scuola di San Rocco were present. After this solemn function, the Marchesa walked through the Merceria and the most crowded streets in the city to the Rialto, "and enjoyed herself exceedingly," writes Sanuto, "making an attendant walk on each side of her, supporting her arms, for the sake of her dignity."¹ The advance of years could not diminish her energy and love of sight-seeing, and at fifty she was as full of life and as interested in everything about her as she had ever been. But although the Doge was eager in his professions of regard for the Marchesa and her son, he was already wavering in his allegiance to the Emperor, and before the end of the year both Venice and the Pope entered into a secret agreement with France.

From the moment of his election, Clement VII. adopted the crooked policy of Leo X., and, without breaking openly with the Emperor, began to negotiate secretly with Francis I. He assumed a strictly neutral attitude in the hope of gaining time, and tried by skilful intrigues to preserve the balance of power between the two rivals, both of whom he dreaded equally. But while he directed his gravest censures against Alfonso d'Este, who had taken advantage of the late Pope's death to recover Reggio, he confirmed Federico Gonzaga in his office as Captain-General, and treated his envoy with marked favour. All through the summer, Castiglione remained in Rome, keeping a watchful eye over his master's interests, while the tangled web of intrigue gathered every day more thickly round the Vatican. Often, in the midst of his thankless and troublesome task, he longed for rest and freedom, and wished

¹ *Diarii*, xxxvi. 366.

himself back at Mantua, enjoying the cool breezes and delicious shades of the Marchesa's beautiful villa of Porto.

"*Signora mia illustrissima*," he wrote on the 20th of July 1524, "I accept any penance which Your Highness sees fit to lay upon me for my neglect in writing, with the humility of a good penitent. Here the heat and the great abundance of excellent melons we have enjoyed during the last month do not agree with me at all, and might do me real harm if it were not for the good medicines recommended by Your Excellency. I hope to come and kiss your gracious hands, if not during these great heats, at least when they are a little abated, and we may still be able to dine in your beautiful loggia, for among all the fair places in Rome, I know of none which can compare with that!"¹

Isabella hastened to assure her friend how eagerly he was expected in her loggia, where his presence would be all the more welcome after the fine praises which he had bestowed upon it. But neither during that summer, nor any other, was the Marchesa to enjoy the company of her most brilliant courtier in the lovely gardens of Porto. For on the same day that the Count was sighing to be once more at home, Pope Clement addressed a letter to the Marquis, begging that he might be allowed to send his good servant, the Magnifico Baldassarre Castiglione, on an important mission to His Cæsarean Majesty at Madrid.² Neither Federico nor the Count could refuse this flattering request, and Isabella was the more inclined to gratify the Pope's wish, because

¹ Luzio e Renier, *Mantova e Urbino*, p. 255.

² *Esenzioni*, p. 32; Serassi, *Lettere di Negozi*, i. 133.

she was about to send her third son, Ferrante, to the Court of Spain. The marked favour which Charles V. had lately shown the Marquis had encouraged her to take this step, and Castiglione gladly promised to serve the young prince to the best of his powers. "I long more than ever to enjoy Your Excellency's loggia," he wrote on the 4th of August, "and grieve to think how little I am likely to be there now. When I am in Spain, I shall often wish myself back at Mantua, but shall console myself by serving Don Ferrante, until God allows me to return, and find the rest which is needful at my age and time of life."

Ferrante Gonzaga was barely seventeen, but was already a tall and active youth, who inherited his father's powers of horsemanship and skill in courtly exercises, and his mother's love of art and letters. "I rejoice," wrote Ercole Gonzaga to his mother from Bologna, "to hear that my brother Ferrante is devoting himself to such laudable deeds, as well as to those studies which by Your Excellency's kind care we have learned to love from our tenderest years." But it was in the career of arms, rather than in that of letters, that Isabella's youngest son was to earn his laurels, and rise to that high place in the Emperor's favour which he afterwards attained. Meanwhile his mother had not abandoned the hope of obtaining a Cardinal's hat for Ercole, and by her orders Castiglione renewed his application on the subject to Pope Clement. His Holiness seemed inclined, he wrote, to lend a favourable ear to the proposal, but would make no promises, and in October, the Count urged Federico Gonzaga to come to Rome himself, saying that the Pope was anxious to see him, and his presence would, he felt sure, advance the

matter in hand.¹ The Marquis took the hint, and actually started for Rome in the middle of October. When, however, he reached Bologna, he heard that Francis I. had suddenly crossed the Mont Cenis, and was marching on Milan. In this critical state of affairs, he felt that it was impossible to continue his journey, and returned to Mantua to await the further development of affairs.² By the time that he reached home, Francesco Sforza had been compelled to evacuate Milan and retire on Lodi, leaving a strong garrison in the Castello, while Francis I. laid siege to Pavia, which was stoutly defended by the Spanish captain, Antonio de Leyva. All through the winter months the Imperialist generals were compelled to remain inactive for want of money and reinforcements, and in Rome, Pasquino, who had recovered his voice under the new Pope, offered a reward "for the discovery of the Imperial army, lost sometime last October in the mountains between France and Lombardy, and never heard of since."³ "Here, in Rome, there is no news," wrote the nuncio Chiericati to Isabella. "All the great and important tidings come from Lombardy, where Your Excellency now is, so I can only serve you up a salad of the different fragments which reach us from beyond the Alps. Here both the Colonna and the Orsini are raising forces, and we all wonder if the French are going to invade Naples, but His Holiness observes a strict neutrality, and only seeks to keep the peace." In other words, the Pope persevered in his temporis-

¹ Serassi, *Lettere di Negozi*, i.

² Sanuto, *Diarii*, xxxvii.; D'Arco e Braghirolli, *Arch. St. It.*, vii, 191.

³ *Il Principe*, by Machiavelli, ed by L. Burd, p. 159.

ing policy, and refused to declare himself openly on either side. Since Mantua remained at peace, and Federico's presence in the field was not required, Isabella now decided to go to Rome herself, and ask the Pope for Ercole's Cardinal's hat in person. She had already started on her journey when Castiglione came back to Mantua and took leave of his mother and children before his departure for Spain. He brought with him, at Federico's request, the painter Giulio Romano, the pupil of Raphael, "whom I love," he wrote to the Pope, "every bit as much, now he is dead, as when he was alive." And the Count also brought the Duke a model of a beautiful villa and spacious gardens, which had been designed by Michel Angelo. Federico admired these plans immensely, and declared his intention of building a similar palace at Marmirolo, where he had lately erected a sumptuous theatre and other splendid buildings.¹ This scheme, however, seems to have been abandoned, and Giulio Romano, who now took up his abode at Mantua, began to build his famous palace of the Tè, on the marshy ground outside the Pusterla Gate, formerly occupied by the Marquis Francesco's stables.

In those days the handsome young Marquis was passionately in love with Isabella Boschetti, whose fair face and form may still be seen in the Psyche, painted by Messer Giulio's hand, whom we see reigning supreme amid the goddesses on the ceiling of the Palazzo del Tè. And it was for his mistress that Federico built the noble Palazzo della Giustizia, which was also decorated with paintings by the hand of his favourite master. Isabella bore him

¹ Luzio e Renier, *Mantova*, p. 257.

three children, and his devotion to her made him reject all proposals of marriage. After his father's death he broke off his engagement with Maria di Montferrato, and obtained a dissolution of the contract from Clement VII.¹ Some of his relatives were anxious that he should marry the King of Poland's daughter, but Federico himself took little interest in the scheme, which was allowed to drop. All this was a cause of great distress to his mother, who longed to see the succession secured in her family, and suffered many things from the selfishness and jealousy of Federico's mistress. Paolo Giovio, who knew her intimately, and frequently visited Mantua, tells us that the Marchesa was often left alone, or with only two or three faithful old servants, while her son's *innamorata* rode proudly through the town, followed by a crowd of courtiers and ladies. It was then, the historian explains, that the Marchesa adopted the device of a many-branched candlestick, such as is used in the services of Holy Week, when the priests put out one light after the other till only one is left, as a symbol of the undying flame of faith. "And this device," the Bishop writes, "Madama caused to be painted in her rooms of the Corte Vecchia and in her villa of Porto, and I, who was always her loyal servant, gave her the motto, *Sufficit unum in tenebris*, which recalls Virgil's line, *Unum pro multis*."²

Bandello, we have already seen, speaks of the evil influence which Isabella Boschetti exerted on the Marquis; and some of the Marchesa's own servants, such as Mario Equicola, forgot their duty to their

¹ Davari in *Arch. St. Lomb.*, 1887.

² *Delle Imprese*, p. 59.

old mistress in their eagerness to ingratiate themselves with her son. Mario, however, did not live much longer to make mischief between Federico and his mother. He was too ill to accompany Isabella on her journey to Rome, and died at Mantua in July, 1525. Castiglione proved her faithful friend to the last, and did not forget her in the anxieties and distractions of his Spanish mission. "God knows," he wrote from Mantua, "how much it grieves me not to kiss your Highness' hands before my departure!" and on his arrival at Madrid, he hastened to give her news of Don Ferrante. "Thank God, I am well, and although everything here seems strange, I am beginning to get used to Spanish customs, and these gentlemen seem pleased to see me. A week ago, my illustrious lord, Don Ferrante, went to S. Jacopo di Galicia. He is very well indeed, in high favour with Cæsar, and adored by all these Spanish lords. I hope Your Highness will write and tell me how you are, and if your secretaries are too busy, M. Andrea Piperario will gladly write all you are good enough to tell him for me."¹ Madrid, April 6, 1525.

In July, Messer Baldassarre wrote again from Toledo, advising the Marchesa, who was by this time in Rome, to prolong her travels, and visit the shrine of S. Jacopo before her return. "In old days," he remarks gaily, "Your Excellency used to say she had a great wish to visit the shrine of S. Jacopo di Galicia. It seems to me this would be the very time to go there, and you would see so many beautiful places on the way that you would be delighted! I

¹ Luzio in *Giorn. St.*, 1900, p. 74; *Arch. St. Lomb.*, 1908, p. 8.

seem to hear you laugh, thinking that I am saying this in jest, to remind you of the accursed love of travel which that Signor of the house of Este left to all his race! But I say this because I really think the journey would please Your Excellency. I know that La Brogna will not approve, because of her wish to return to Mantua, and will hold the pardon of Santa Croce more precious than that of S. Jacopo. Enough that I have given you my advice. Your Excellency will do as she chooses.”¹ But Isabella’s wish was not to be fulfilled, and she never went to Spain, or saw Castiglione again.

¹ Luzio e Renier, *Mantova*, p. 258.

CHAPTER XXXV

1525—1527

Isabella goes to Rome—Visits Urbino and Loreto—Is received by the Pope—Occupies the Palazzo SS. Apostoli—Death of Cardinal Gonzaga and of Duchess Elisabetta of Urbino—The Imperialists advance southwards—Passage of the Po, and death of Giovanni delle Bande Nere at Mantua—Lannoy and the Pope sign a truce—Bourbon advances against Rome—The Marquis of Mantua warns the Pope—Isabella refuses to leave Rome—Fortifies her house, and gives shelter to ambassadors and Roman ladies—Ercole Gonzaga made a Cardinal.

EARLY in January, Isabella sent her servants to Rome, to prepare the Duke of Urbino's palace near the church of S. Maria in Via Lata, for her reception. A month later she herself started on the journey with a small suite, including her new secretary, Giovanni Francesco Tridapale, and her old favourite, Brogna, who was restored to favour after the death of the Marquis Francesco, and resumed her former post of lady-in-waiting. The Marchesa was also accompanied by two young princesses of remarkable beauty and charm—Camilla Gonzaga di Novellara, and Giulia, daughter of Lodovico Gonzaga of Gazzuolo, and grand-daughter of Antonia del Balzo, who enjoyed the reputation of being the loveliest woman of her time. After spending a few days at Ferrara, the travellers took boat for Ravenna, and then rode overland to Pesaro, which was safely reached on the 17th of February. Here both

Duchesses were awaiting the Marchesa, and the whole city welcomed her with the greatest joy. Guidobaldo rode out with a troop of noble youths to meet his grandmother three miles from the gates, and Leonora and the ladies of the court saluted her at the foot of the palace steps. Elisabetta, whose health had been failing ever since her return from exile, was even more overjoyed to see her beloved sister-in-law; and, instead of setting out again on the following morning, Isabella was persuaded to spend two nights at Pesaro. A pastoral play, with musical interludes and dances, was performed in her honour on the last evening, and early the next day the Marchesa left for Sinigaglia, on the way to Loreto.

On the journey from Loreto to Rome, she received the news of the great battle which had been fought at Pavia on the Emperor's twenty-fifth birthday—the Feast of St. Matthias—and of the complete defeat and capture of Francis I. Many of Isabella's friends were present on that hard-fought field. Her nephew, Charles de Bourbon, and her kinsman, the gallant Pescara, were the heroes of the hour. La Trémouille, La Palisse, Galeazzo di San Severino, were among the 12,000 corpses left on the battlefield; while Federico di Bozzolo and St. Pol and many others were taken prisoners with the French king. When the Marchesa reached Rome, on the 1st of March, she found the Imperialists exultant, and the Pope half-dead with terror. For it was openly said that Charles V., furious with Clement the Seventh's temporising game, vowed that he would come to Italy himself and give His Holiness a lesson. Under these circumstances, the Pope was

especially anxious to retain the friendship of the Mantuan princes. When he heard from Pietro Aretino that Federico was exceedingly anxious to possess Raphael's portrait of Pope Leo X., which hung in the Palazzo Medici at Florence, he immediately gave orders that this famous work should be presented to the Marquis. In December 1524, Francesco Gonzaga, who had succeeded Castiglione as ambassador at the Vatican, wrote to inform his lord that a copy of the picture was to be made at once by some good Florentine master, and that as soon as this was done, the original would be sent to Mantua.¹ Andrea del Sarto was selected for the task, and it was his copy, as we learn from Vasari, that was sent to Federico by Ottaviano dei Medici in the following August. The Pope's kinsman was naturally reluctant to part with Raphael's own work, and the copy was so admirable that even Giulio Romano did not discover the deception until Vasari himself revealed the secret.² The same causes prompted His Holiness to receive the Marchesa with the highest honour.

It was the year of Jubilee, but very few pilgrims had ventured to come to Rome in these troubled times, and Isabella was the only visitor of distinction who attended the services of Holy Week, and received plenary indulgence. The Pope supplied her with wheat, barley, wine, sugar, wax, oil, meat, and fish for the use of her household, and invited the Marchesa to a private audience on the 9th of March. But when Isabella explained the real object of her

¹ A. Baschet, *Arch. St. It., serie terza*, iii. 118-120; D'Arco e Braghirolli, vii. 192, 193.

² *Vite*, v. 41.

journey, and asked His Holiness to make her son Ercole a Cardinal, the Pope replied with evasive answers and civil words. The Marchesa, however, resolved to bide her time; and, with the intention of spending the summer months in Rome, accepted the offer of the Colonna Palace, close to the Church of the SS. Apostoli, from Cardinal Pompeo Colonna. In this splendid house, surrounded with beautiful gardens, and finely situated on the brow of the Quirinal hill, Isabella spent the next two years, and witnessed the awful catastrophe of the siege and sack of Rome.

For a time, however, all went well. The Pope, in his alarm, consented to form a new alliance with the victor of Pavia, and on May-day attended mass at the Church of the SS. Apostoli, and was afterwards entertained at a banquet in the house of his enemy, Cardinal Colonna. From the window of the palace looking down into the church, the Pope and the Marchesa witnessed the strange revels that were held on this feast-day. His Holiness and the Cardinal joined in letting loose hundreds of fowls, partridges, quails, and pheasants among the women who thronged the sacred precincts, and watched men climbing a greasy pole to reach the pig at the top, while spectators from the neighbouring houses threw pails of water over them—"sports," adds Marcello Alberini, who was present, "which are hardly convenient in a sacred temple, but which the mob joined in gladly, feeling sure they would never take place again."¹

Isabella's old friends in Rome were, for the most part, dead and gone. Cardinal Bibbiena, Giuliano dei Medici, Raphael were no more, and Castiglione was

¹ M. Alberini, *Diarii*, &c.

far away in Spain. But a few were still left. Sadoletto was papal secretary; Paolo Giovio and Chiericati—whom the last-named prelate calls the sweetest of all his friends—were both at the Vatican; while Pietro Bembo came to Rome that winter to pay his respects to Pope Clement. “Only the other day,” wrote the Venetian humanist on the 20th of April, “I saw the Lady Marchesana, honourably attended by a fair and noble company, driving about in her chariot, which is as fine a sight as it is a novel one in Rome.”¹ Among the ladies who were present with Isabella on this occasion was Camilla Gonzaga di Novellara, whom Bembo honoured with his special devotion, and with whom he kept up a lively correspondence. After he left Rome, he sent this youthful lady some of his sonnets, begging her to present his salutations to the Marchesana and to the Venetian ambassador, Domenico Venier, whom he asked in his turn to love and honour the fair Camilla a little more warmly for his sake than he would naturally do on his own account.² Another humanist who was deeply attached to Camilla Gonzaga, the poet Molza, came to Rome in March from Bologna, bringing letters to the Marchesa from her son Ercole. “I know,” wrote the future Cardinal to his mother, “how much you delight in the company of learned men, but yet I ask you for my sake to receive Molza with especial kindness, and I am sure that before long he will compel you and all your ladies to love him for his own sake.”

So Isabella's house became once more the meeting-place of poets and men of letters, who accom-

¹ *Lettere*, iv. 41.

² V. Cian, *Un Decennio nella vita di M. P. Bembo*, p. 29.

panied her in her walks and drives, and read their verses or told their stories under the ancient ruins of the Temple of the Sun, in the terraced gardens looking down on the Baths of Constantine and the distant Campagna. Her interest in antiques was as keen as ever; she explored the ruins, sought out Roman medals, and bargained with dealers and collectors over the prices of ancient marbles and mosaics. Michel Angelo was absent working for the Pope in Florence, but she made friends with his follower, Sebastiano del Piombo, and especially admired his skill in painting portraits. She visited all the famous churches and shrines in turn, and was present in her chariot on the festival when all Rome assembled to hear the witticisms of Pasquino, who had recovered his old gaiety, under the rule of a Medici Pope.

On the 4th of October, the Marchesa heard of the death of her brother-in-law, Cardinal Sigismondo Gonzaga, who had been laid up for many months at Mantua with gout and increasing infirmities, and without a moment's delay, she hastened to the Vatican and entreated the Pope to confer the vacant hat on her son Ercole. Clement vacillated as usual between his wish to oblige the Marchesa and his dread of affronting other applicants, but Isabella insisted with so much force that in the end the Pope promised to make Ercole a Cardinal whenever he saw his way to increasing the number of the Sacred College. The Marchesa left his presence, with a brief to this effect in her hands, and on the 4th of November, Bembo, writing from Padua to his friend Beazzano in Rome, remarked: "A fortnight ago, the Duke of Urbino showed me a copy of a brief which the Pope had

addressed to Signor Ercole Gonzaga, brother of the Marquis of Mantua, promising, on the faith of a true Pope, to make him Cardinal at the next creation, and this I think will take place very soon." And he wrote to Ercole in the same strain, advising him to go to Rome himself as soon as possible. The death of Sigismondo was a blow to his tender-hearted sister Elisabetta. Her own health was in a very precarious state, and Federico Gonzaga, fearing the effect of a sudden shock, wrote to Emilia Pia, begging her to break the news gently to his aunt. But early in January, the good Duchess became seriously ill, and on the 28th she passed away, to the sorrow of her family and subjects. Both the Duke and his wife were absent at the time, and Leonora wrote from the neighbourhood of Verona to tell her mother of Elisabetta's serious illness. A few days later, the news of her death reached them, and they both wept for one who had been to them the best of mothers. The loss of this devoted sister and friend was even more severely felt by Isabella, who had been closely connected with Elisabetta for the last forty-six years, and the Mantuan ambassador, Francesco Gonzaga, gives a touching account of the sorrow with which she received the news.

"Madama," he writes to Federico on the 5th of February, "has felt the greatest distress at the death of the widowed Duchess of blessed memory, and besides the ties of blood, and the singular love which has always united these two illustrious princesses, she grieves over the loss of the most rare lady whom this age has known. But it is the will of God, and we can only bear our loss in patience. The news of the said Duchess's death reached the ambassador of

Urbino just before I received Your Excellency's letter on Friday evening, and as the hour was late, and Madama was in the company of some of these Cardinals, I did not tell her until the following morning. His Holiness, on his part, showed the greatest sorrow for this sad event, and, in conversation with me, remarked that we had lost a lady of rare gifts and singular excellence, and that he realised this the more fully because he had known her intimately in the darkest days of her life. And he observed that she would be a great loss to the Lord Duke, whom she helped by her wise and prudent counsels, and the admirable love which she had for his subjects."¹

But, amongst all the tributes to Elisabetta's memory, that which her old friend Bembo paid her was the truest and most eloquent. "I have seen many excellent and noble women," he wrote, "and have heard of some who were more illustrious for certain virtues, but in her alone among women all virtues were united and brought together. I have never seen or heard of any one who was her equal, and know very few who have even come near her."²

The words, as Lady Eastlake remarked, may well have suggested Shakespeare's lines :—

"For several virtues
Have I liked several women, never any
With so full soul, but some defect in her
Did quarrel with the noblest grace she owed
And sent it to the foil; but you, O you,
So perfect and so peerless are created
Of every creature's best."³

¹ Luzio e Renier, *Mantova*, p. 274.

² *Opera*, iv.

³ *Quarterly Review*, lxvi. 24.



[Photo, Arch. 1200.]

ELISABETTA GONZAGA, DUCHESS OF URBINO.

By G. CAROTO.

(Uffizi)

[To face p. 250, col. ii.]



Meanwhile important political events were taking place. On the 14th of January, the Treaty of Madrid was signed, and Francis I. was released from captivity. But hardly had he set foot in France than the Pope absolved him from his oath to observe the conditions of the treaty, and himself joined the new League against the Emperor with France, Venice, Florence, and the Duke of Milan. The Marquis of Mantua, who was kept informed by his mother, and Francesco Gonzaga, of all that happened in Rome, remained strictly neutral, and begged the Pope's leave to abstain from taking up arms against his liege lord the Emperor, while the Duke of Ferrara, whom Clement VII. refused to admit into the League, made a secret agreement with Charles V., and supplied his troops with provisions and ammunition. The Pope was more furious than ever with his old enemy. "If the Duke wishes to make the Emperor master of all Italy," he exclaimed, "let him try his worst! Much good may it do him!"¹ Guido Rangone now led the papal forces to join the Duke of Urbino, who, as Venetian general, assumed the chief command of the armies of the League. But whether owing to ill-health or excessive caution, Francesco Maria allowed the Castello of Milan to fall into the hands of the Imperialists without striking a blow in its defence, and the unfortunate Sforza was compelled to capitulate, on the 24th of July. He retired to Lodi, and the Duke of Urbino, after taking Cremona, left the camp, and joined his wife at Mantua.

For a time all remained quiet in Rome. Isabella

¹ Gayangos, "Spanish Calendar of Letters"; Creighton, "Hist. of the Papacy," vi. 330, &c.

spent the summer pleasantly, entertaining her friends and collecting antiques and pictures. On the 26th of July, the wedding of Vespasiano Colonna, the head of his powerful house, and of the beautiful Giulia Gonzaga, was celebrated in the Marchesa's palace. The bridegroom was already an elderly man, and had one daughter by a former marriage, named Isabella, the richest heiress in Italy, whom the Pope destined to be the bride of his young cousin Ippolito dei Medici. But his vast wealth and position made the match a brilliant one for the young Gonzaga princess, and gave the Marchesa especial satisfaction. The wedding was solemnised with great splendour. Vespasiano took his fair bride to his castle of Palliano in the Campagna, and no one dreamt of the storm that was about to burst.

Two months later, on the 20th of September, Rome was startled by a sudden inroad of the Colonnas. Vespasiano and Ascanio Colonna, together with their kinsman Cardinal Pompeo, and the Imperial envoy Don Ugo di Moncada, entered the Lateran Gate without opposition, marched through the city, and encamped in the Piazza SS. Apostoli, under the windows of Isabella's palace. The Pope and Cardinals fled to the Castell Sant' Angelo, the Spanish soldiers pillaged the Vatican, and carried off the gold and silver plate from the altars of St. Peter's. Even Chiericati, whose Imperialist sympathies were known to all, and who stood high in Charles the Fifth's favour, was unable to save his property. In his terror, Clement sent for Moncada, and promised to withdraw from the League. The invading force retired, and the Pope recalled his troops to Rome, and employed them to wreak vengeance on the

castles and dependants of the Colonnas in the Campagna. But in November the German captain, Frundsberg, crossed the Alps with 12,000 *lands-knechte*, and after a few skirmishes with the Duke of Urbino's forces, succeeded in effecting a junction with Bourbon at Piacenza.

Isabella heard from her son of the death of Giovanni delle Bande Nere, the son of her old friend Giovanni dei Medici and Caterina Sforza, and the one leader of mark in the armies of the League. This gallant soldier was mortally wounded in a desperate attempt to prevent the Imperialists from crossing the Po at Governolo, and was carried through thickly falling snow to the house of Lodovico Gonzaga in Mantua. There the Duke of Urbino came to visit the dying hero, and his old enemy, the Marquis Federico, showed him every courtesy. "He kissed him tenderly," writes Pietro Aretino, in the letter describing his friend's last moments, "and spoke gracious words, such as I never heard from any prince saving only Francesco Maria." Federico, deeply moved at the sight of this brave man lying on his death-bed, begged him to ask for some favour, since in his lifetime he had refused to accept anything at his hands. "Love me when I am dead," said Giovanni. "That I will indeed," replied the Marquis, "and more than this, I, and many others, will never cease to lament the loss of so noble and excellent a prince."¹ Soon afterwards, the *Gran diavolo*, as his soldiers called him, breathed his last, to the great regret of his kinsman Pope Clement. "Et en verité," wrote the French ambassador, Du Bellay, "c'estoit un grand homme de guerre."

¹ Pasolini, *Caterina Sforza*, ii. 39.

The Duke of Urbino now retreated towards the Venetian frontier, and the Imperialist leaders, finding that no further opposition was offered, continued their march southwards, ravaging the country and living on plunder. Frundsberg was left at Ferrara dangerously ill, and Bourbon found himself powerless to restrain the savage hordes of German *lands-knechte*, clamouring for pay. Meanwhile, Renzo da Ceri took the command of the papal forces south of Rome, and succeeded in repulsing the Imperialists under Lannoy, Viceroy of Naples. Encouraged by this success, the Pope opened negotiations with Lannoy, who came to Rome on the 25th of March, and signed a truce of eight months. Clement VII. agreed to withdraw his troops from Naples, while Bourbon was to retire into Lombardy on payment of 60,000 ducats. Lannoy went to meet Bourbon at Florence, and the Pope, lulled into false security, disbanded his forces in spite of repeated warnings from the Marquis of Mantua. "The prudent advice given by Your Excellency in your letter of the 28th to the Pope," wrote Francesco Gonzaga, "telling him not to disarm in spite of the truce, was as necessary as it is worthy of praise, but His Holiness seems already to have surrendered at discretion. There is no doubt that it is the fixed, absolute will of God to ruin both the Church and her ruler."¹

At the same time, Federico entreated his mother to return to Mantua at once. But Isabella was determined not to leave Rome without Ercole's hat, and replied that it would be time to think of taking her departure when the *lands-knechte* were at the gates. And since her nephew was in command of the

¹ Gregorovius, *Rom*, viii. 507.

Imperial army, and her son Ferrante had hurried back from Spain to join him, she had little cause to fear for her own safety.

Lannoy now hastened to meet Bourbon, according to his promise. He found the Imperialist general at the foot of the Apennines, and told him of the truce which had been signed in Rome. But the Germans and Spaniards alike refused to accept these terms, and since the Duke of Urbino was guarding the passes towards Florence, demanded to be led against the papal city. Lannoy, seeing that he was powerless, went on to Siena, while Bourbon addressed a letter to the Pope asking for 240,000 ducats, and resumed his march across the Apennines, along the great high-road to Rome.

On the 2nd of May, news reached the Vatican that Bourbon was at Viterbo. Then the Pope for the first time realised the peril of the situation, and sent a courier to implore the Duke of Urbino to hasten to his help. Many of the panic-stricken citizens carried their treasures to the Castell Sant' Angelo, or buried them underground. Others prepared to fly, but were stopped by a decree from the Pope forbidding any citizen to leave Rome on pain of death. The gates were closed, and Renzo da Ceri hastily levied a few hundred troops and strengthened the defences of the city. "This morning," wrote the French ambassador, Du Bellay, "I spent a whole hour with the Pope. It is difficult to express the terror he is in, but I did my best to inspire him with a little courage. He wished Renzo to collect 1000 men, but it was impossible to raise as many ducats."¹ In this extremity, Clement took the only means of

¹ Guicciardini, *Opere inedite*, v.

raising money in his power, and appointed five new Cardinals, who each paid 40,000 ducats as the price of his elevation. One of the five was Ercole Gonzaga, whom the Pope chose in spite of the opposition of many of the Cardinals, who could not forgive his brother Ferrante for serving with Bourbon. But this was not the time to raise objections, and on Sunday the 5th of May, when Bourbon was already under the walls of Rome, the red hat was borne to the Palazzo Colonna, and safely delivered to the Marchesa by Cardinal Pizzino. The desire of Isabella's heart was at length gratified, but she could no longer leave Rome.¹ In this critical moment the Marchesa showed remarkable presence of mind. She sent a messenger to her son Ferrante and to Charles de Bourbon, asking them to protect her house if they captured the city. At the same time, she ordered the palace to be fortified and garrisoned, and laid in provisions to enable her followers to stand a siege.

On Saturday the 4th of May, Bourbon sent a herald to Renzo da Ceri, asking him to give his forces provisions and a free passage to Naples. These proposals were rejected with scorn, but the same envoy conveyed a message to Isabella from Bourbon, telling her to fortify and defend her house until he had entered the city and was able to provide for her safety. During the next two days a number of wealthy Romans and noble ladies, including Madonna Felice Orsim, the daughter of Pope Julius, sought shelter within the walls of her palace, and as many as 3000 souls are said to have found protection there. Both Francesco Gonzaga, the Mantuan envoy, and

¹ M. Sanuto, *Diarii*, xlv. 207.

the ambassadors of Ferrara and Urbino were among the fugitives whom Isabella received; and on the morning of the 6th of May, when the invaders were already in the Borgo, the Venetian envoy, Domenico Venier, being unable to reach Castell Sant' Angelo, took refuge under the same hospitable roof. Then the gates were barricaded, and the brave Marchesa calmly awaited the issue.

CHAPTER XXXVI

1527—1529

Siege of Rome—Death of Bourbon—Rome sacked during three days—Alessandro and Ferrante Gonzaga protect Isabella's palace—Scenes of carnage in the city—Cruelty and sacrilege of the soldiers—Isabella leaves Rome for Ostia—Returns to Mantua—Is received with great joy—Escape of the Venetian ambassador—General horror at the capture and sack of Rome—Grief of Isabella's friends—Letters of Bembo, of Erasmus, and of Sadoletto—Death of Castiglione in Spain.

ON the evening of Sunday the 5th of May, the Imperialist army crossed Monto Mario and encamped under the walls of Rome. At midnight the trumpets sounded, and in the early dawn the assault began. The point chosen for attack was on the Vatican hill, between the Porta Torrione and S. Spirito, where the walls were lowest, and the assailants were hidden by the thick white fog which clung to the banks of the river. But a heavy fire from Renzo da Ceri's men on the walls and from the guns of Sant' Angelo thinned their ranks. For a moment the result seemed doubtful. Then Bourbon, a splendid figure in his silver armour, sprang from his horse, seized a ladder, and, calling on his men to follow him, began to scale the wall near the Campo Santo. But hardly had he set foot upon it than he fell back, struck by a musket-ball in the groin, crying, "*Ha, Notre Dame, je suis mort.*" The Prince of Orange threw his mantle over him, and his attendants bore

him into the neighbouring chapel, where he breathed his last half an hour later, still repeating the words, "*À Rome! à Rome!*"¹ Benvenuto Cellini, it is well known, claimed to have fired the shot which took such fatal effect, and his boast receives some support from the statement of an eye-witness, that Bourbon was shot by one of the Pope's goldsmiths, who stood on the wall and singled him out as a person of importance.

The Spanish troops, maddened at seeing their leader fall, returned to the attack with fresh courage; a breach was made in the walls near Santo Spirito, and the wild hordes of soldiery burst upon the ill-fated city. The Pope was in St. Peter's kneeling before the altar, when the news reached him that the foes were in the Borgo. He saw the Swiss guards flying before the *landsknechte*, and heard the cries of "*Spagna! Impero!*" which rang through the streets, as his attendants hurried him along the passage to the Castello. Thirteen Cardinals followed in his steps, and Paolo Giovio threw his purple mantle over the Pope, lest his white robes should attract attention as he crossed the wooden bridge into Sant' Angelo.² One old Cardinal, Armellini, was drawn up in a basket after the portcullis had been let down. Another, the aged Cardinal Pucci, was dragged half dead with fright and exhaustion, through a window.³ The English and French envoys, Gregory Casale and Alberto Pio of Carpi, had already taken refuge there, and were joined later in the afternoon by Renzo da Ceri, who, after a vain attempt to defend

¹ Gregorovius, *Rom*, viii. 526.

² P. Giovio, *Vita P. Colonna*.

³ Gregorovius, *op. cit.*, viii. 526.

Trastevere, gave up all for lost and galloped over the Ponte Sisto to the Castello. Luigi Rodomonte, the gallant young Gonzaga captain, led the Italian contingent of the Imperialist force over the Montorio and across the Ponte Sisto into the heart of the city.

By half-past five the fighting was over, and the Germans encamped on the Campo di Fiore, while the Spaniards occupied Piazza Navona, and Ferrante Gonzaga guarded the bridge of Sant' Angelo and the approach to the Castello. Then these savage hordes of soldiery were let loose. Thousands of rude Germans and fierce Spaniards rushed upon the defenceless citizens, hurled women and children out of the windows, and tortured their innocent victims to discover hidden booty. In their wild frenzy these ruffians showed neither pity nor reverence. Churches and convents were robbed and burnt, altars stripped of their sacred vessels, nuns outraged, and Cardinals dragged naked through the streets. The Prince of Orange took up his quarters in the Vatican, and thus succeeded in saving the papal library and art treasures; but the Flemish tapestries, executed from Raphael's cartoons, were stolen, and the *landsknechte* stabled their horses in the Stanze adorned by the great master of Urbino. The archives of the Capitol perished, and countless family records and manuscripts of priceless value were lost. The great gold Cross of Constantine was carried off from the gates of St. Peter's, and the graves of Pope Julius II. and of the Prince of the Apostles himself were rifled. The unspeakable horrors of the next three days are best described by the Imperial Commissioner, Gattinara, in the letter which he addressed to his imperial master: "All the church ornaments were stolen, all the sacred

relics destroyed. Even the Sancta Sanctorum in the Lateran, that most ancient and holiest shrine, was sacked, and the Volto Santo, or veil of Veronica, was passed from hand to hand in the taverns of Lungara. The Church of St. Peter and the Pope's palace, from top to bottom, were turned into stables. There was no leader to control our soldiers, and no discipline anywhere. The Prince of Orange and our other captains did what they could, but to little purpose. The *landsknechte* behaved like true Lutherans, the rest like brutes. No one of any age or sex escaped. All alike were tortured and plundered."¹

From the windows of the Palazzo Colonna, Isabella d'Este and her ladies looked down on these awful scenes. They heard the agonising shrieks of the women and the groans of the dying, and, over all, the sullen booming of the guns of Sant' Angelo. As they waited in terrible suspense through the long hours, many among them thought that their last moment had come. At length, as it was growing dusk, a captain, wearing the black, red, and white imperial colours in his helmet, was seen running across the piazza. Camilla Gonzaga looked out and joyfully recognised her brother Alessandro, who was making his way on foot to the palace gates. Immediately ropes were let down from the lofty battlements, and the gallant Count was drawn up to the windows. Then Isabella learnt from her kinsman's lips all that had happened. He told her how the city had been stormed, and her nephew Bourbon slain in the act of scaling the walls, and how his body was now lying in state in the Sistine Chapel, while the Pope and Cardinals had fled to the Cas-

¹ Dennistoun, "Dukes of Urbino," vol. iii. App.

tello. Before his tale was ended, a Spanish cavalier, Don Alonzo da Cordova, arrived, and told the Marchesa that the evening before, he had received orders from the dead Duke to take her house under his protection. Finally, about ten o'clock at night, Ferrante himself arrived in hot haste, having been unable to leave his post at the bridge of Sant' Angelo until this instant. Isabella, who had not seen her son since he started for Spain three years before, welcomed him with tears of joy, and Ferrante, on his part, was greatly relieved to find his mother and her friends unhurt. Her house was the only one in Rome that escaped, excepting the Cancellaria, which was occupied by Cardinal Colonna. The palaces of the Cardinals who belonged to the Imperialist party, and had, therefore, thought themselves safe, were stormed and plundered, and the house of the Portuguese ambassador, the Emperor's own nephew, was ruthlessly sacked. Even Ferrante Gonzaga's presence could not save the distinguished personages who had found shelter in the Marchesa's palace from paying a heavy ransom. "It was hard work for me to save Madama," wrote Ferrante to his brother the Marquis, "for a report had been spread abroad in the camp that she had more than two millions of treasure in her palace, and this was entirely due to her compassion, which made her receive more than 1200 ladies and 1000 citizens within its walls." In the end it was decided that the Marchesa and her household should be exempted from ransom, but that all the other refugees in the palace should pay down a sum of 60,000 ducats, of which Ferrante told his brother he did not receive a single farthing.¹

¹ Gregorovius, *Rom*, viii. 540.

“Signor Ferrante and Signor Luigi [Rodomonte] have gained little or nothing in the sack of Rome,” wrote a Venetian from the camp of the League, after conversing with some of the fugitives who had been released by these captains. “Rather, to their credit be it said, they have lost and spent their own fortunes in saving their personal friends who were unable to pay the ransom which the *landsknechte* and Spaniards exacted from their victims. People cannot say too much of Signor Luigi, whose generosity and liberality are beyond all praise.”¹

The Venetian ambassador, Domenico Venier, was claimed by Alessandro Gonzaga as his prisoner, the Count gallantly desiring Madama to fix the price of his ransom. Even then he had no easy task to save the envoy from being massacred or carried off to Spain by Don Alonzo, who offered to pay Alessandro 5000 ducats, if he would give up his captive. As the ambassador told the Doge, he owed his life solely to the intercession of Signor Ferrante and his illustrious mother, who promised to be responsible for their kinsman's prisoner. Finally he was allowed to remain with Madama, on condition that she would deliver him into the Count's hands at Mantua, or pay the ransom which had been agreed upon. The poor Venetian afterwards addressed a pitiful appeal to the Doge from Civitavecchia, imploring His Serenity to intercede with the Marquis on his behalf, since he had lost everything in the siege, and if he went to prison at Novellara he would certainly die. As it was, his secretaries had to pay a ransom of 150 ducats each, and Don Alonzo demanded 10,000 ducats from the Magnifico Marc-

¹ M. Sanuto, *Diarii*, xlv. 206.

antonio Giustiniani, because he heard that this wealthy prelate had offered the Pope 40,000 ducats to be made a Cardinal. Another Venetian patrician, Marco Grimani, was more fortunate, and left Rome disguised as a muleteer in the Marchesa's suite.¹ Even when this bargain had been concluded with the Spanish captain, the *landsknechte* threatened to storm the palace, complaining that they had been deprived of their share of the ransom, and were only prevented from carrying out their intention by the Prince of Orange, who left a stout German captain, Johann by name, with a strong garrison to defend the house.

On the 9th, the Prince issued a decree forbidding all plundering, and summoning the troops to arms; but the demoralised soldiers paid no heed to his orders, and during a whole week the same scenes of violence and carnage were repeated. The palaces of the Cardinals Della Valle, Siena, Cesarini, and Enckefort, who had paid a heavy ransom to the Spaniards, were afterwards sacked by the Germans, and these prelates were only saved by taking refuge in the Cancellaria. When Cardinal Colonna returned to Rome on the 10th of May, he burst into tears at the scene that met his eyes. Paolo Giovio hailed the coming of this prelate, who had been the Pope's most bitter enemy, as that of an angel from heaven, and tells us that during the next few days he rescued no less than 500 unhappy nuns, as well as countless other victims of every age and sex, from the hands of the cruel Germans and still more cruel Spaniards.

"And all this misery has been caused by the Duke of Urbino. Either this man has not the

¹ M. Sanuto, *Diarii*, xlv. 214.

courage to face the enemy, or else he rejoices in the Pope's ruin." So wrote Guicciardini, the Florentine commissioner, from the camp of the League at Isola, nine miles from Rome. Francesco Maria's conduct was indeed inexplicable. He was either, as the historian suggests, indifferent to the deliverance of Rome, or else the most incapable of generals. On the 3rd of May, he set out with his army from Florence. On the 6th, Federico of Bozzolo pushed forward with 800 horse, but was delayed by an unlucky accident. His horse fell, and the brave captain broke his arm and leg, and had to be left at Viterbo. His lieutenant, Pepoli, arrived at Ponte Molle, only to find that he was too late. The enemy were already in the Borgo, and with his small force he could do nothing. The bulk of the army did not reach Isola till the 22nd. Even then the Duke declared that he could do nothing to help the Pope until he had received reinforcements.

"The end of it all is," Guicciardini writes, "that the Pope has been left to his fate. I need not say whose the fault is. . . . I am no general, and do not understand the art of war, but I may tell you what all the world is saying, that if, when the news of the capture of Rome reached us, we had pressed on to the relief of the Castello, we should have released the Pope and Cardinals, and might have crushed the enemy and saved the unhappy city. But all the world knows what our haste has been! . . . You would really think that we had to do, not with the deliverance of this unhappy Pope, on whom we all depend, or with the rescue of this great city in its death-agony, but with some trifling matter. So the poor Pope remains in the Castello, begging for help

so earnestly that his entreaties would melt the very stones, and in so abject a state of misery that even the Turks are filled with pity!"¹

The Pope's condition was indeed pitiable, and he had many months of cruel indignities to bear before an agreement with the Emperor was finally signed on the 9th of December. Even then his terror was so great that he preferred to escape by night with the help of an Imperialist captain. Leaving the Castello by a secret door, disguised as a pedlar, he mounted a horse which was waiting for him in the Vatican gardens, and rode to Orvieto under the escort of the gallant Luigi Rodomonte.

Long before this, Isabella d'Este had left Rome.² As soon as some degree of order had been restored, on the 13th of May, her son Ferrante, with a strong body of Spanish and Italian guards, escorted the Marchesa and her suite, together with the three ambassadors, to the shore of the Tiber, where galleys were waiting to take them to Ostia.³ There they were detained six days by rough weather, and when Isabella, impatient to proceed on her journey, set sail in one of Andrea Doria's ships, a terrific storm suddenly arose. After escaping from this peril, the travellers sailed into smooth water and reached Civitavecchia on the morning of the 23rd of May in beautiful weather.⁴ The next day they took horse and rode overland by Corneto, Toscanella, and Pesaro to Ravenna, leaving the treasures of antique marbles, pictures, and gems which the Marchesa had collected in Rome to go by sea to Leghorn. Wherever Isabella and her companions

¹ Guicciardini, *Op. Inedite*, vol. ix. ² A. Reumont, *Rom.*, iii. 220.

³ M. Sanuto, *op. cit.* xlv. 216, &c. ⁴ M. Sanuto, *op. cit.* xlv. 220.

came, they were greeted with breathless inquiries as to the fate of Rome, and told the same terrible tale of the awful disasters which had befallen the once glorious city.

Isabella's own family had been full of anxiety on her account. When the first news of the death of Bourbon and the sack of Rome reached the camp of the League, it was feared that she had perished in the general ruin. On the 14th of May, the Duke of Urbino's secretary, writing from Orvieto to Leonora, who was at Venice with her children, said that the Portuguese ambassador's house had been sacked by the brutal soldiery, greedy for gold, and that the same was reported of Madama's house, which God forbid! It was known, however, that the ambassador of Urbino and many illustrious personages had found shelter under the Marchesa's roof, and that, alone among the Roman palaces, the house had been strongly fortified. The Marquis Federico heard from Florence that only the Castello Sant' Angelo and a palace which held a Marchesa and many nobles had escaped the fury of the destroyers; but it was not till a servant of the Venetian ambassador reached Mantua, on the 16th of May, that Isabella was known to be safe under her son's protection. A few days later, Ferrante himself wrote to relieve his brother's mind, and by the 9th of June the Marchesa herself reached Ferrara. After a brief interval of sorely-needed repose, Isabella once more resumed her journey, and sailed up the Po, in the ducal barge, to Governolo. Here Ercole Gonzaga came to meet her, and received the Cardinal's hat from his mother's own hands.¹ The next day they sailed up

¹ G. Daino, *Cronaca*; D'Arco, *Notizie*, 237.

the Mincio to Mantua, where the Marquis and a brilliant train of knights and ladies were awaiting their arrival, and the whole city poured out to welcome the beloved Marchesa, and escort her with shouts of triumph and tears of joy to the palace gates. Leonora was at Venice, where the Signory practically detained her as a hostage for the Duke's fidelity, but her two little girls went to Mantua to receive their grandmother. "I have not yet taken the children to visit Madama," wrote their tutor on the 15th of June, "because she only arrived yesterday, and is very much occupied, but we hope to see her soon."¹

The Venetian ambassador, Domenico Venier, reached Mantua on the same lovely June evening as the Marchesa, and remained there as the prisoner of Alessandro da Novellara until the end of October. His wife came to meet him, and spoke warmly of Federico's kindness, and of the pleasures which he was enjoying after the cruel hardships which he had endured. None the less the envoy took the first opportunity of escaping from Mantua without paying the ransom which had been agreed upon, and on the evening of the 17th of October, sent the Signory word that he had reached Verona safely. The Marchesa, justly indignant at this breach of faith, addressed a letter of remonstrance to the Doge, which was read to the Senate and pronounced to be very wise by all who were present. But we are not told if Count Alessandro ever received his promised ransom, and the Mantuan ambassador who delivered Isabella's letter was careful to inform the prince that the Signor Marchese rejoiced with His Serenity on the Venetian envoy's escape.²

¹ Luzio e Renier, *Mantova*, &c., p. 279.

² M. Sanuto, *op. cit.*, xlv.

Meanwhile, Ferrante Gonzaga, who had withdrawn to Velletri on the 17th of June with the Imperialist horse, wrote to congratulate his mother on her escape from the horrors of the ruined city, and safe return to Mantua. "I can no longer delay to kiss your hand, and rejoice with you that you were so fortunate as to leave that most miserable and unhappy city of Rome, which, after the utter ruin brought upon her by the soldiers, is now scourged by God with famine and plague.—From your son and servant, FERRANTE GONZAGA."¹ Velletri, June 23, 1527.

The *landsknechte*, who remained in Rome, were dying by thousands, and the plague had even penetrated into the precincts of Sant' Angelo. But still the German soldiers refused to leave Rome until they had received their arrears of pay, and anarchy reigned supreme. When at length the last foreign troops left Rome, and the Pope returned after an exile of ten months, he found a ruined and depopulated city. It was reckoned that as many as 30,000 of the inhabitants had perished by the sword of the invaders or died of plague and famine, while another 20,000 had sought refuge in flight.² So deeply was the memory of those days of horror engraved in the hearts of succeeding generations, that to this day Roman mothers hush their children to sleep with the words, "Go to sleep, little one; Borbone is gone!"³

From all parts of the civilised world a wail went up to heaven over this awful catastrophe. Isabella's friends sighed over the terrible ruin which had over-

¹ Gregorovius, *Rom.*, p. 540.

² M. Alberino.

³ R. Lanciani, "Destruction of Rome," p. 226.

whelmed this great and beautiful city, once the place of all delights. Bembo wept in the lovely gardens of his Paduan villa, when he heard the heart-rending details told by the poet Molza, who had escaped with his life, as it were by miracle. "Come here, I implore you," wrote Pietro to his old friend Tebaldeo, "and leave the miserable corpse of our once beautiful Rome."¹

The poor poet had lost everything in the sack, and owed his life to Cardinal Colonna, on whose charity he lived until a timely loan from Bembo reached him. Paolo Giovio lost his precious manuscripts, and Colocci saw his priceless collection of antiques destroyed by the savage soldiery, and was himself exposed to their brutal insults. "Fortunate indeed," said Molza, "are those who were spared the sight of these awful horrors, and did not have to witness the funeral of the city of Romulus." Sadoletto, in the peaceful haven of his bishopric at Carpentras, heard with anguish of the misery which his friends had suffered, and saw in these terrible events the long-delayed judgment of God. Yet the Roman scholar could not repress a sigh for those joyous days of yore, and in a touching letter to his old friend Colocci, he recalls those pleasant evenings in the Quirinal gardens when Bembo and Castiglione, Phædra and Nava-gero, and the brilliant Marchesa herself, spent happy hours together in gay or serious, in witty or thoughtful discourse. "Alas! those days are for ever gone, and the cruel fate of Rome has darkened all our joy."² As Erasmus wrote to Sadoletto: "Rome was not alone the shrine of the Christian faith, the nurse of

¹ *Lettere*, iii. 34.

² Sadoletto, *Ep.*, p. 106.

noble souls and the abode of the Muses, but the mother of the nations. To how many was she not dearer and sweeter, more precious than their own native land! . . . In truth, this is not the ruin of one city, but of the whole world.”¹

There was another of Isabella's friends on whom the blow fell with even greater severity. This was Castiglione, who, as nuncio at the court of Madrid, had done his utmost to appease the Emperor's wrath and save the unhappy Pope. His efforts were doomed to failure. Charles V. himself could hardly be held responsible for the sudden turn which events had taken. But the bitter reproaches which Clement VII. addressed to his envoy were keenly felt by the Count. He was already ill, and never recovered from the shock. Even the Emperor's favour could not console him, and, after lingering on through the next summer, he died at Toledo on the 7th of February 1529.

Charles V. heard the news with genuine regret, and, turning to his courtiers, said: “We have lost one of the greatest cavaliers in the world.” In his home at Mantua, Castiglione's death was the cause of bitter sorrow, alike to his aged mother, who alone remained to watch over her orphan grandchildren, and to the friends whom he had loved so well. The coming of his footsteps was vainly awaited in his favourite loggia, and the Marchesa's *réunions* lacked the presence of her most brilliant guest. Giulio Romano was employed to raise a noble monument to his old patron's memory in the sanctuary of S. Maria delle Grazie, and Isabella lamented in him the most accomplished of her courtiers and the most faithful of her friends.

¹ Erasmus, *Ep.*, p. 988.

CHAPTER XXXVII

1527—1529

Misery of Italy—Plague in Mantua—Federico's buildings—Isabella's Roman antiquities lost on the voyage—Her correspondence with the Roman dealer, Raphael of Urbino—Sebastiano del Piombo—Cardinal Ercole's love of art and letters—Death of Emilia Pia—Veronica Gambara and Correggio's Magdalen—The Allegories painted by Correggio for Isabella's Studio—Titian visits Mantua and paints Isabella's portrait—Copy by Rubens at Vienna.

ISABELLA found her faithful Mantuans in a melancholy condition on her return from Rome. During the two years that she had been absent, war had raged unceasingly in Lombardy. The unfortunate Francesco Sforza, ill in body and exposed to attacks on all sides, vainly tried to maintain himself against the Imperialists, and the Spanish general, Leyva, had the greatest difficulty in feeding his army. The desolation of the country and the misery of its few remaining inhabitants made a deep impression on the English ambassadors who were sent by Henry VIII. to the Congress of Bologna in 1529. There were no labourers at work in the fields, no dwellers in the villages, and in the once flourishing cities of Lombardy, whole families might be seen begging their bread. "It is, sir," wrote Nicolas Carew to the King, "the most pity to see this country, as we suppose, that ever was in Christendom. . . . Betwixt Vercelli and Pavia the whole country has been



Count - Baldassarre Castiglione
by Raphael (Louvre)



wasted. We found no man or woman labouring in the fields, and all the way we saw only three women gathering wild grapes. The people and children are dying of hunger.”¹

Although Mantua itself had been spared the horrors of war, the continual passage of foreign armies had brought famine and destitution in its train, and to add to the general distress, a terrible outbreak of plague spread over the whole of North Italy. During the year 1528, one-third of the population of Mantua died of this epidemic, and Isabella, in her anxiety to relieve the distress of her subjects, once more pledged her finest jewels, including the famous collar of a hundred gems. In spite of these troubles, Federico Gonzaga eagerly carried on his architectural works, and Giulio Romano and a whole band of assistants were employed to decorate the sumptuous halls of the Palazzo del Tè. So intent was the young Marquis on his plans, that he made a great favour of allowing the artists in his service to carry out any improvements in Isabella's houses. On one occasion he wrote from his favourite villa of Marmirolo, which was also being decorated on a lavish scale, to Giulio Romano in these terms: “Messer Giulio,—Hearing that the illustrious Madonna, our honoured mother, wishes Maestro Battista to make those new rooms of which she spoke, we beg you to explain to Her Excellency, that although this will be very inconvenient to us at a time when so many workmen in our pay are ill and unable to work, we are willing that M. Battista should serve her for this one week. But I beg you to entreat Her Excellency, in our

¹ “Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII.,” iv. 2719.

name, not to keep him more than a week, as this would cause us great inconvenience and expense.”¹

Isabella, it is clear, had returned from Rome full of plans for the decoration of her palaces, and the eighteenth-century historian, Bettinelli, tells us that in his time, a gallery with elegantly painted arabesques, leading from the Studio of the Grotta to the garden-court, bore the date of 1527.² Unfortunately one of the galleys laden with the precious marbles, tapestries, and porcelain which the Marchesa had collected with so much trouble and expense in Rome, fell into the hands of Saracen pirates, and only a few of these treasures ever reached Mantua. Among these priceless works of art were two of the Vatican tapestries, executed from Raphael's designs—the Conversion of Saul, and S. Paul in the Areopagus,—which Ferrante Gonzaga rescued from Spanish soldiers and sent to Mantua for safety.³

Among Isabella's own purchases were two figures which she had bought in Rome, from a dealer who bore the splendid name of Raphael of Urbino, for 43 ducats, as was duly entered in her book of payments, under the date of January 14, 1527.⁴ After the marbles were brought to her house, the Marchesa discovered to her great indignation that these statues were not antiques, and promptly sent them back to the dealer, demanding the return of her money. Then came the siege and sack of Rome, and in the general confusion that followed no more was heard of Messer Raphael.

¹ D'Arco, *Arte*, &c., ii. 153.

² S. Bettinelli, *Delle lettere e d. arti Mantovani*, p. 87.

³ Luzio, *Arch. St. Lomb.* xxxv. 89.

⁴ Gaye, *Carteggio*, ii. 192, &c.

After her return to Mantua, the Marchesa wrote to Francesco Gonzaga, who had gone back to Rome with the Pope, begging him to inquire into the matter, and obtain the restoration of her ducats, or, if these are not forthcoming, of the statues, since to lose both would be "an unfair and iniquitous thing." "If M. Raphael," she adds in a postscript, "persists in saying that these figures are antique, you can give him the opinions of M. Giacomo Sansovino the sculptor, of Colombo the antiquarian, and of a sculptor called Lorenzo, all of whom pronounced the said figures to be modern. All three are highly skilled in the art of sculpture, so that their opinion is of great weight." M. Raphael, however, still declared that his statues were antiques, and that one was lost, but begged the Marchesa to accept the remaining figure, together with two majolica vases which had been ordered by Monsignore Palmieri before the siege, but were now left on his hands. Isabella replied that, if she could not have her ducats, she would prefer to have a certain fine medal which he had shown her in Rome. But this medal, the dealer said, had been lost, with many others of his most valuable objects, during the occupation of Rome by the Imperialists, so that he was left almost penniless. The Marchesa, however, would not be so easily satisfied, and addressed another letter to her ambassador on the 14th of August.

"It is all very well," she wrote, "for M. Raphael to plead poverty, and make himself out so destitute, but our belief is that he does not choose to satisfy us in any form. Neither can we understand the truth of his excuse, since we know that, when the

Colonnas pillaged the Borgo, he told us that he had sent this antique medal with all his most precious things out of Rome. This makes us feel sure that, if he were so prompt in saving his medal on that occasion, he must have been still more expeditious before the invasion of the Spaniards and the sack of Rome. If he denies this, we shall not believe him so readily, but shall remain convinced that he could let us have the medal if he chose. So we beg you to ask him for this again, and assure him that we would rather have nothing in exchange for our statuettes than put up with poor and vulgar things."

Again, on the 4th of September, she repeated her conviction that M. Raphael had the medal, and did not see how he could refuse to let her have it if he had any shred of honesty left! But the unfortunate dealer seems really to have been unable to gratify the Marchesa's wish, and after a protracted correspondence, Isabella wrote curtly to Francesco Gonzaga on the 29th, saying that she would be content with the things which M. Raphael offered, and desired them to be sent to Mantua by the next courier. The ambassador was not more successful in recovering a marble bas-relief which the Marchesa had bought, but allowed to remain in a dealer's shop for greater safety, and which, after the sack, had passed into Cardinal di Cesi's hands. This prelate courteously but firmly declined to give up his possession, and after a protracted correspondence, Isabella told her ambassador that it was clear Monsignore meant to keep the relief, and that as she did not wish to go to law with him, he had better say no more.¹

¹ Gaye, *op. cit.*, p. 192-5.

Fortunately the Marchesa was able to recover another of her Roman purchases, a collection of silver medals which she had left in the charge of her son Ferrante. When this prince retired to Velletri, he gave his mother's medals to Messer Pandolfo Pico della Mirandola, the agent who had told her of Raphael's death. On Ferrante's return to Rome, however, the medals were missing, and it was not till February 1529 that the Marchesa sent the painter Sebastiano del Piombo, to find out what Pandolfo had done with them. Sebastiano, who was then in Venice, informed her that he was soon leaving for Rome, and would execute her commission on his arrival without fail. On the 1st of March, Isabella replied:—

“*Magistro Sebastiano Luciano*,—We have received your reply to our letter about the medals, and are very glad to hear that you are going to Rome in a few days, because by this means we hope to receive them shortly. And we hope you will be so good as to give them to our ambassador at the Vatican, who has orders to send them to us by the best and safest way, and for this we shall be very grateful.—ISABELLA, MARCH. MANT.”¹

The Venetian master was as good as his word, and the medals were safely forwarded to Mantua, and presented by the Marchesa to her son Federico, who thanked her exceedingly for the gift, which he valued highly. Sebastiano was already well known both to the Marquis and his mother, who had a high opinion of his merit as a portrait painter. In May 1524, Federico wrote to one of his correspondents in Rome begging for a small picture from

¹ Gaye, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

the hand of Sebastianello Veneziano, "not figures of Madonnas or Saints, but some fine and beautiful invention." The Marquis, it seems, was anxious to emulate the collection of paintings by different masters, which adorned his mother's Studio of the Grotta.¹ Four years later, when the newly-made Cardinal Ercole went to pay his respects to the exiled Pope, he fell in with the Venetian master, who was an intimate friend of the humanist Molza, and wrote to his mother from Orvieto on the 25th of March 1528 :—

"A few days ago, Maestro Sebastiano, a painter whose art is as excellent as his reputation is great, came to pay me his respects. I begged him to take my likeness, because the other day, when I was in Mantua, I remember hearing Your Excellency say that he painted very life-like portraits, and he has promised to do this as soon as he can procure the requisite colours. As soon as the picture is painted I will send it to Your Excellency."

Isabella replied without delay, on the 6th of April :—

"I told you, and repeat now, that it is perfectly true this *Maestro* has the most admirable skill in portraiture, and I am greatly delighted to hear of your intention, all the more since you are going to send me this portrait. I assure you that nothing in the world would please me better."²

Now that Federico had transferred so much of his affections to his mistress, Isabella Boschetti, and that Ferrante was constantly engaged in military service, Ercole occupied an increasingly large place

¹ Gaye, *op. cit.*, ii. 10.

² Luzio in *Emporium*, 1900, p. 431.

in his mother's heart. The young Cardinal was an attentive son, and his frequent letters to Isabella abound in allusions to artistic and literary matters. While he was still at Bologna he became a collector. In January 1523, hearing that Alberto Pio da Carpi had been declared a rebel and deprived of his State by Prospero Colonna, he begged that general to allow him to buy the exiled prince's library, which was said to contain the finest collection of Greek and Latin authors in all Italy. Colonna readily agreed to grant his request, but before he obtained possession of the famous library, Alberto's brother, Leonello Pio, recovered Carpi by a fortunate stroke, much to Ercole's disappointment. After the sack of Rome, the poet Molza found himself compelled to sell his own library, and wrote to his old friend Ercole in April 1529, imploring him to buy it, lest so noble a collection should leave Italy. "If Your Excellency does not buy the books," he adds, "I fear they are sure to go to England, which God forbid should happen in the lifetime of the Cardinal of Mantua!"¹

In May 1528, Isabella received the sad news of her old friend Emilia Pia's death at Urbino. Elisabetta Gonzaga's devoted companion did not long survive the sister-in-law whom she had loved so well, and died very suddenly on the 21st of May, without being able to make her will or receive the last Sacraments. This excellent lady, whose virtues were known to all, was singularly free from the prejudices and superstitions of her age, and often discussed religious questions with a frankness which excited suspicion in certain quarters. It was now reported at Orvieto, that Madonna Emilia had died repeating passages

¹ Luzio in *Giorn. St.*, viii. 385.

from Castiglione's "Cortigiano" to Lodovico da Canossa, instead of devoutly commending her soul to God. The Pope asked the Urbino ambassador if this were true, but he denied the report indignantly, and wrote to Leonora Gonzaga, saying: "What tales people tell! I for one do not believe the story. Still, even this may be possible. None the less, I pray that our Lord God may receive her soul in peace."

Three months afterwards, Emilia Pia's niece, the accomplished Veronica Gambara, wrote an interesting letter to the Marchesa, telling her of a picture which the young painter of Correggio, Antonio Allegri, had just finished. A daughter of Gianfrancesco Gambara of Brescia, and of Alda Pia, Veronica belonged to a group of younger women, remarkable for beauty and culture, who looked up to the Marchesa with great respect, and felt highly honoured by her friendship. In 1503, when she was barely eighteen, we find Veronica writing to thank Isabella for the great goodness which she had shown her, and after her marriage to Giberto I., lord of Correggio, in 1508,¹ stood sponsor to her eldest son. Giberto died in 1518, but Veronica, who was his second wife, remained faithful to his memory, and devoted herself to literature and the education of his children. Her own poems were highly esteemed by contemporary scholars, especially by Pietro Bembo, who corresponded with this princess from the days of her girlhood. Veronica herself often visited Mantua, and was on friendly terms with Castiglione, Molza, and many other members of Isabella's circle. She was deeply interested in the gifted painter

¹ V. Rossi, *Musica in Urbino*, p. 6.

Allegri, who was a native of Correggio. A pupil of the Ferrara artist, Lorenzo Costa, Allegri probably accompanied his master to Mantua in 1508, and one of his early works, the charming Madonna at Hampton Court, was in the Gonzaga collection. He afterwards worked for Alessandro Gonzaga da Novellara, who married Giberto da Correggio's daughter, Costanza. In the last years of his life, he was often employed by the Marquis Federico, and the beautiful Antiope of the Louvre, and the Education of Cupid, which both came to England in the Mantuan collection, were probably painted before this date. So that Correggio was already well known to Isabella when Veronica Gambara wrote the following letter:—

“I should fail in my duty to Your Excellency if I did not tell you of the masterpiece of painting which our Antonio Allegri has just completed, knowing, as I do, how much pleasure it would give Your Highness, who is so excellent a judge of these things. The picture represents the Magdalen in the desert in a dark cavern, whither she has fled in her penitence. She kneels on the right, lifting clasped hands to heaven and imploring pardon for her sins. Her beautiful attitude, and the expression of deep but noble sorrow on her most lovely face, are so striking that every one who has seen the picture is filled with wonder. In this work the painter has expressed all that is most sublime in the art of which he is so great a master.”¹

Isabella, we know, was very short of money at this moment, and could hardly afford to buy the picture, much as she may have wished to possess it. But it is worthy of notice that in a letter written from Parma about the same time, by Carlo Malaspina, he

¹ W. Braghirolli, *Giorn. di Erud. Art.*, i. 325.

remarks that the Marchesa di Novellara has heard from Ortensio Landi that Correggio has lately painted a beautiful Magdalen for the Magnificent Signore di Mantova.¹

Whether the Marchesa ever owned a Magdalen by Correggio or not, we know that two admirable tempera paintings from his hand adorned her Grotta. In the inventory of 1642, these works are described as: "Two pictures by the entrance door, from the hand of the late Antonio da Correggio, one of which represents the story of Apollo and Marsyas, the other the three virtues, Justice, Temperance and Fortitude, teaching a child to measure time, in order that he may win the palm and be crowned with laurel." And in Vanderdoort's² inventory of Charles the First's collection the same paintings are described as: "One large and famous picture painted upon cloth in water-colours, kept shut up in a wooden case, where they are tormenting and flaying Marsyas. The second, another the like piece in water-colours of Anthony Correggio, being an unknown story containing four entire figures in a landskip, and four angels in the clouds." The Commonwealth inventory is still vaguer in its interpretation, and merely enters Correggio's temperas as *A Satire Flcad* (flayed) and *Another of the Same*, but values them at the high price of £1000, for which they were actually bought by the banker Jabach.

The true title of these paintings was the Triumph of the Vices and of the Virtues. In the one, a naked man is seen bound to a tree. Evil Habit, a woman wearing vipers in her hair, binds him with

¹ Braghirolli, *op. cit.*, 332.

² P. 76.

cords, and Pleasure plays a flute in his ear, seeking to drown the voice of Conscience, a figure clad in violet, who darts scorpions at the helpless victim, while a mischievous satyr dangles a bunch of grapes before his eyes. In the other, three tall and stately women are grouped round a fair boy in armour. Justice, clad in a coat of mail, leans on her lance, Fortitude reclines on a lion's skin, with sword and bridle in her hand, and Wisdom measures the globe with one hand, while with the other she points to the wide valley and distant hills, telling the youthful scholar that the future as well as the past are all hers to give. Three genii, playing musical instruments, hover in the golden light above the trees, and one floats downwards with a wreath to crown the child trained in the paths of virtue.

These subjects agree exactly in style and character with the compositions by Mantegna, Perugino, and Costa, which already adorned Isabella's Studio. They were, no doubt, invented by the Marchesa herself, with the help of some favourite humanist, and painted in tempera by the young master of Correggio to match Andrea's *fantasie*. If their allegorical nature was little suited to the painter's genius, he has shown great skill in overcoming the difficulties of the theme, and has given us forms of real grace and beauty, set in a landscape of exquisite charm.

Soon after Isabella's return from Rome, two pictures by a still greater master reached Mantua. These were the portraits of Pietro Aretino, and of the Venetian patrician Adorno, an old friend of the Gonzagas, who had managed to ingratiate himself with the Federico of late years. They were sent to the Marquis at the Aretine's suggestion, with a letter from

Titian, begging him to accept these pictures of his two friends, which he thinks may be agreeable to His Excellency, whose love of painting is well known, and has been proved by his generous patronage of Messer Giulio Romano. Both Federico and his mother were delighted with these portraits, now alas! lost to the world, and endeavoured by every means in their power to bring Titian to Mantua. The painter, however, was not able to accept their pressing invitations until March 1529, when Alfonso d'Este sent him to Mantua with a letter, cordially recommending this favourite master to his nephew, but begging him not to keep him too long. It was, there can be no doubt, during the month which he spent at the court of the Gonzagas, at this time, that Titian painted his first portrait of Isabella. Unfortunately this precious picture, the only portrait of the Marchesa which Titian painted from life, went to England, where it was described as a "Duchess of Mantua, in a red gowne," and valued at £50 at the time of the King's sale, after which it was never heard of again. Before this, however, it was copied by Rubens when he visited Mantua early in the seventeenth century, and the Flemish master's copy now hangs in the Imperial Gallery at Vienna.¹ Rubens has coarsened the features and vulgarised the forms of Titian's model, but, in the absence of the lost original, his work is of great interest, and gives us some idea of Isabella's appearance in ripe middle age. The Marchesa wears a handsome robe of crimson velvet with a gold girdle, a long necklace round her bare throat, and an open chemisette of frilled muslin, studded with gems. Her dark locks have not yet lost the

¹ No. 845.

golden-brown tint of earlier years, but are partly hidden by a turban-shaped cap of puckered silk, richly adorned with jewels. This style of coiffure, as we know, had been adopted by Isabella more than twenty years before. In 1509, her cousin, Countess Eleonora Rusca, the daughter of Niccolo da Correggio, wrote from her husband's castle of Locarno on Lago Maggiore, asking the Marchesa's leave to borrow this invention of hers, which had been already adopted by several Milanese ladies, and wear a similar head-dress, as she had lost her hair in a recent illness.¹ Isabella's natural tendency to *embonpoint* had evidently increased with years, and when Titian painted her at the age of fifty-five, she was decidedly matronly in appearance. But her handsome features are still the same as in Leonardo's drawing and Cristoforo's medal, and bear a remarkable likeness to those of her daughter Leonora. Both face and form are full of character, and the whole has an air of dignified repose not unbecoming the Marchesa's age and rank. We see before us a noble woman of refined taste and clear intellect, already past the noontide of life, who has known the best and the worst that life has to give, and who, serene and untroubled, neither vexed by dark presentiments nor deluded by false hopes, can await the coming morrow in the spirit of her own motto—*Nec spe nec metu*.²

¹ Luzio in *Arch. St. Lomb.*, 1901, p. 171.

² Since these lines were in print, M. Leopold Goldschmidt has acquired a superb Titian from a private English collection, in which the best critics recognise the original portrait of Isabella d'Este. The features have all the delicacy that is wanting in Rubens's copy, the expression is more refined and intellectual, and the whole has that indefinable air of distinction and nobility which stamps the great Venetian's art. See *Gazette d. Beaux Arts*, 1903, p. 106.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

1528—1529

Marriage of Ercole d'Este to Renée de France—Isabella goes to Modena to receive the bride—Fêtes at Ferrara—Character of Renée—Isabella's regard for her niece—Renée's sympathy with French and Italian reformers—Isabella's toleration—Messibugo's Book of Ercole's festival—Treaties of Barcelona and Cambray—Charles V. lands at Genoa—Is entertained by the Duke of Ferrara on his way to Bologna—Ferrante Gonzaga marches against Florence—Isabella visits Solarolo—Arrives at Bologna for the Congress—State entry of Charles V.

IN the autumn of 1528, Isabella went to Ferrara and was present at the festivities in honour of her nephew Ercole's marriage to Renée, daughter of Louis XII., King of France, and sister of the reigning Queen Claude. The successful campaign of the French armies under Lautrec in Naples had encouraged the Duke of Ferrara to renew his old alliance with Francis I.,¹ and on the 28th of June the wedding of his son Ercole with this monarch's sister-in-law, the Princess Renée, was solemnised with great splendour in the Sainte Chapelle. After a succession of hunting-parties and balls at Fontainebleau and St. Germain, the bridal pair set out for Italy on the 20th of September, as Bartolomeo Prospero wrote from Montargis to inform the Marchesa. "They will travel," he writes, "by slow stages through Lyons, Turin, Parma, Reggio, and Modena, and will hardly reach Ferrara before

¹ Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, ix. 314.

the middle of November. Here," he adds, "there is no other news, saving a report that the Empress is ill of an infectious disease, and that the Chancellor of Spain is dying. Cardinal Campeggio has arrived at court on his way to England, and holds a commission from the Pope, it is said, to make peace between the Powers." Meanwhile, the Duke of Ferrara, in his anxiety to do honour to this princess of France, begged Isabella to assist in her reception, since his only daughter Leonora was still a child. Thirty-seven years had passed since Isabella, then herself a youthful bride, had brought her young sister-in-law, Anna Sforza, to Ferrara; and twenty-five years since, in the full pride of her beauty, she had assisted at Lucrezia Borgia's wedding. Now she once more came back to her old home to welcome the heir of Ferrara's bride, for the third time in her long and eventful life. At her brother's request, she came to Modena early in November, and received the bride when she made her triumphal entry amid such firing of guns, blowing of trumpets, and ringing of bells, that it seemed, says the chronicler, as if the sky and air would crumble to pieces.¹ After a fortnight spent in fêtes and rejoicings, Ercole and his bride went on to Belvedere, the superb new palace—celebrated by Ariosto in his *Orlando*—which Alfonso had built on an island in the Po. A description of this wonderful summer palace, with its halls and chapel decorated by Dossi, its stately terraces and stairs leading down to the river, and delicious gardens planted with orange groves and box hedges, and adorned with marble loggias and fountains, had been lately written by the Ferrarese

¹ Fontana, *Renata di Francia*, i. 64, &c.

poet, Bordoni, and dedicated to the Marchesa Isabella.¹ After spending the night in this enchanted spot, the royal bride sailed down the Po to Ferrara in the ducal bucentaur, and was received at the Porta S. Paola by Ercole's brother Ippolito, Archbishop of Milan, the ambassadors of France, Venice, and Mantua, and all the clergy and doctors of Ferrara, who escorted her through the Strada Grande to the Duomo. The streets were hung with red, green, and white draperies; and a hundred pages in black satin livery, with rose-coloured caps and stockings, preceded by the Spanish court jester, Diego, riding on a dromedary, led the way. The bride followed, borne in a crimson litter under a golden baldacchino, and attended by Madame de Soubise on horseback, and fourteen French ladies in a chariot. The plague had lately ravaged Ferrara, and the chronicler's description of the misery of its inhabitants forms a melancholy contrast to the splendour of the bridal procession. "The streets were deserted and the shops closed. Every day dead corpses were found at the doors of the churches, and people might be heard in the streets crying, 'I die of hunger,' with no one relieving them." But a decree had been issued commanding all good subjects to put off their mourning and appear in gay attire to welcome their young Duchess, and the loyal Ferrarese, who loved a pageant dearly, thronged the streets and Piazza of the Duomo, where the bride alighted, and received the benediction of the Archbishop and the keys of the city, which, by the Duke's orders, were presented to his daughter-in-law in a silver bowl.

¹ Gruyer, *op. cit.*, ii. 137.

The Marchesa Isabella was awaiting the bride at the foot of the grand marble staircase of the Este palace, and led her by the hand into the Sala Grande, which was hung with priceless gold and silken tapestries. Here the ambassadors presented her with presents of brocades and velvet and damask, and the chief citizens brought oxen and calves, cheeses, and capons for her acceptance. Renée wore her wedding robe of gold brocade, with a necklace of enormous pearls and a gold crown on her head, which, in the opinion of Luigi Gonzaga, the Mantuan ambassador, to whom we owe these details, was out of place, since Ercole's bride was, after all, not a queen, but only the daughter of a king! Her appearance also gave rise to some debate among the courtiers. She was short and awkward, and her figure was slightly deformed, which made the ladies of Ferrara, who remembered the beauty of Anna Sforza and the sweet face and golden hair of Lucrezia Borgia, declare that the new Duchess was very unlike these lamented ladies, being small, ugly, and hunchbacked. Her health was delicate, and she was unable to speak Italian, or to understand what was said without the help of an interpreter. She also showed a marked preference for French attendants and French fashions, and Isabella's old friend, Bernardo Tasso, was the only Italian whom she took into her service, and employed as secretary. Altogether, the first impression formed of the new Duchess on her arrival at Ferrara can hardly be said to have been a favourable one. But closer acquaintance went far to remove these prejudices. Her manners were gracious and winning, her conversation full of charm and wit; and although she was

too French in her tastes to be popular in Ferrara, she soon won the affection of her father-in-law. Her genuine love of learning attracted the foremost scholars to the ducal court. She herself presided over an Academy which held its sittings in her rooms, and became the patron of all the charitable institutions in the city. Renée was deeply religious by nature, and had shown her interest in the doctrines of the reformers before she left France. Clément Marot wrote a nuptial hymn in her honour, and spoke in his writings of "*Ce noble cœur de Renée de France*"; and the Geneva Protestant, Calvin, was received by the Duchess at Ferrara in 1536. Vittoria Colonna soon became one of her greatest friends, and brought her friend, the Dominican friar, Bernardino Ochino, to preach in the Duomo of Ferrara.

Isabella, herself never took any great interest in the new doctrines that were held by so many of her friends in Rome and Venice. No one was further removed from bigotry, or more averse to religious persecution. She protected the Jews in Mantua as far as possible, issued edicts relieving them from disabilities whenever she held the reins of government, and was always in favour of a large and kindly toleration. In her eyes Pomponazzi's merits as a teacher outweighed any scruples as to the orthodoxy of his beliefs, and she trusted her son to him without fear. Her active mind, centred as it was on the present, never seriously pursued either metaphysical or theological inquiries. She accepted the Church's teaching as she had received it from her mother's lips, and did not trouble herself with the inconsistency or the crimes of its rulers. But although Isabella had little sympathy

with Renée's views on these matters, she was attracted by her superior intelligence and literary tastes, and in the difficulties which the young French princess had to encounter from the prejudices of the Italian courtiers, she proved her wisest and most loyal friend.

During the week following the bride's state entry, a series of Ariosto's comedies was performed in the ducal theatre, and on one occasion Alfonso's youngest son, Francesco, a boy of twelve, himself recited the prologue. After this, Isabella returned to spend Christmas at Mantua with her sons, but came back to Ferrara early in January to assist at the Twelfth Night and Carnival festivities, which were of unusual splendour. On the 13th, her secretary, Tridapale, wrote the following letter to the Marquis:—"Last Sunday the quintain races took place, but there was little spirit about them. Few young men ran, and the games began late and ended early. Madama la Duchessa, with her ladies and gentlemen and our own, looked on from the windows and balconies of these rooms, but *Madama mia Illustrissima* preferred to remain by the fire talking to the gentlemen who came to visit Her Excellency. To-night there was dancing both before and after supper till eleven o'clock; but the small size of the room and the immense number of people assembled made the *festa* more tiresome than enjoyable, and there was great confusion among the dancers. The Duke had ordered the 'Menæchmi' to be given in the French tongue on Sunday; but, for what cause I know not, this has been put off till next week."¹ But the most sumptuous of all the fêtes on this occasion was the

¹ D'Ancona, *Teatro*, ii. 430.

banquet given by the young Duke Ercole in the great hall of the Castello on the 24th of January,¹ an entertainment so memorable even in the annals of this gay court that it was made the subject of a volume published twenty years later by the Duke's seneschal, Messibugo, and still preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale. More than a hundred guests met that evening in the magnificent halls of the Castello, lined with marble and alabaster of glittering whiteness and painted by the hand of Titian and Dossi. The brilliantly-lighted table, fifty-five braccia long, was adorned with twenty-five figures of the gods of Olympus in gilt and coloured sugar, designed by the best artists in Ferrara, under the direction of Messibugo, who on this occasion surpassed himself in skill and ingenuity. Chief among them was a group of Hercules strangling the lion, in honour of the bridegroom, Ercole d'Este. Half-way through the banquet a second series of similar figures was placed on the table, with a group of Hercules grappling with the hydra as centre-piece. This was succeeded by a third array, in which Hercules taming the Minotaur was the principal object. Each course was heralded by a troop of musicians, playing the flute, viol, cornet, lyre, and harp, and singing madrigals and rondeaux, under the direction of Alfonso di Viola, the conductor of the orchestra of the Duomo, while sweet organ melodies were heard in the distance. At the conclusion of the banquet attar of roses and other choice perfumes were handed to the guests in delicately-wrought bowls, and silk and gold flowers of exquisite form and colour were presented to the ladies. Last of all, a great golden

¹ Gruyer, *op. cit.* ii. 565.

pastry was placed in the centre of the board, and when the lid was removed a quantity of necklaces, bracelets, earrings, and brooches were brought to light. The guests drew lots for these jewels, some of which were worth as much as fifty ducats a piece, amid great mirth and laughter, after which Ariosto's *Cassaria* was performed in another hall under the poet's own direction. The entertainment closed with a ball, which was kept up till daybreak ; but Isabella, we learn, prudently retired at midnight.

Hardly had the sound of wedding festivities died away, than events took place which altered Alfonso's whole policy. The disastrous result of the French invasion of Naples, and the death of Lautrec, who was carried off by the plague, together with the flower of his army, proved fatal to Francis the First's ambitious designs. The Pope now threw himself into the Emperor's arms, and, after prolonged negotiations, concluded the Treaty of Barcelona on the 29th of June 1529. By this agreement the pontiff was to recover possession of his lost dominions, including Modena and Reggio, to which he still laid claim, and Clement's kinsman, Alessandro, the son of the dead Lorenzo, was to be reinstated in Florence, which had shaken off the yoke of the Medici immediately after the capture of Rome. The defeat of St. Pol's army in Lombardy by Leyva destroyed Francis the First's last hopes, and in August a treaty was signed at Cambray by the Emperor's aunt, Margaret of Austria, and the King of France's mother, Louise de Savoie. By this agreement, Charles V. remained in undisturbed possession of Naples and Lombardy, and Francis I. sacrificed his allies of Florence and Ferrara to the Pope's vengeance.

The triumph of Charles was complete, and on the 12th of August he landed at Genoa, and for the first time set foot in Italy. It had long been his wish to receive the imperial crown in Rome, but the horrors of the siege were still fresh in the minds of all, and Bologna was eventually chosen as the meeting-place between the Pope and Emperor-elect. Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga was sent by the Pope to meet Charles at Genoa, together with the two young Medici princes, Alessandro, who was soon to receive the title of Duke of Florence, and Giuliano's son, Ippolito, who at the age of eighteen had already been created a cardinal. The Emperor announced his intention of visiting his good friend, the Marquis of Mantua, on the way to Bologna, and both Federico and his mother made great preparations to receive their illustrious guest. But before Charles started on his journey, the Duke of Ferrara, eager to ingratiate himself with the all-powerful monarch, begged him to take the shorter road through Reggio and Modena, and placed himself and his subjects unreservedly at His Majesty's disposal. Alfonso himself rode out to meet Charles near Reggio, and pleaded his cause with so much eloquence that the Emperor not only accepted his invitation, but spent several days in his company. The Duke entertained him splendidly both at Reggio and Modena, and finally escorted him to the border of his territories on his way to Bologna. Meanwhile Isabella, realising all the importance of the occasion, and feeling how great were the issues at stake, decided to visit Bologna herself and meet the supreme heads of the spiritual and temporal world. The Emperor was known to look with especial favour

on the house of Gonzaga, and had shown himself graciously disposed both to the Marquis and Cardinal Ercole, while their brother Ferrante, and cousin, Luigi Rodomonte, were among the most valiant captains in his service. Ferrante, in fact, was at this moment marching against Florence, as lieutenant to the Prince of Orange, at the head of an Imperial army, which was to besiege the doomed city and crush her last hopes of freedom.

On the 18th of September this young prince wrote the following letter to his mother from the Imperial camp at Castiglione di Arezzo¹:—

“Most illustrious Lady and dearest Mother,—Although only four days have passed since I wrote to Your Excellency in reply to the letter which you sent me by Messer Salviati da Gubbio, I must tell you of my well-being and of the splendid success of this invincible army. We have lately obtained possession of Cortona, one of the strongest cities of the Florentine Republic, after besieging it during three days and destroying a great portion of the walls. Last night the garrison surrendered at discretion, the Prince of Orange refusing to grant any conditions excepting security of life and property to the citizens. The soldiers gave up their arms, after which they were set free, and the city was placed under commissioners appointed by His Holiness. To-night we are at Castiglione, and were intending to attack Arezzo to-morrow, but hear that it has surrendered and been abandoned by its garrison, so we shall march straight against Florence. If Your Excellency wishes to know the strength of our forces, we have 9000 Italian foot, 4000 German, and 2000

¹ D'Arco, *op. cit.* 297.

Spanish infantry, 40 lances, and 650 light horse, all of them picked men, eager for battle. And now, from my heart, I commend myself to Your Excellency, whose most gracious person may God preserve and prosper in all her ways!—Your son, FERRANTE. From the camp of the most fortunate Cæsarean army, near Castiglione Aretino.”

So with a light heart and high courage the young soldier led his forces against the ancient stronghold of Italian liberties, while on the bulwarks of San Miniato, Michelangelo was repairing the bastions to defend Florence in her last struggle.

When this letter reached Mantua, Isabella was preparing to start on her journey, but on the way to Bologna she paid a visit to a little town some miles farther south, which had lately acquired a new interest in her eyes. This was Solarolo, a small fief near Imola, which Leo X. had bestowed in 1514 upon Cardinal Sigismondo Gonzaga, in gratitude for his support at the time of his election, and which, after that prelate's death in 1525, Isabella bought for a small sum of money. The Marchesa now for the first time paid a visit to her new subjects, in whose welfare she took the deepest interest, and whose city she adorned with many fine buildings, during the last years of her life.¹ After a sojourn of some weeks in this pleasant little town, Isabella proceeded to Bologna, accompanied by a brilliant suite, and in the last days of November entered the city in state.²

¹ Renier in *Italia*, 1888, p. 16. The writer of this article there informed us that he had in his possession documents regarding this interesting episode in Isabella's life, which he reserved for future publication, but which have not yet appeared.

² M. Sanuto, *Diarii*, lii. 144.

The beauty of the maidens in her train, and the splendour of her chariots and liveries, made a great impression on the crowds that were already assembled to witness the solemn meeting and public reconciliation between the Pope and the monarch whose army had sacked Rome. Isabella alighted at the Palazzo Manzola on the Piazza di San Donato, close to S. Giacomo Maggiore, the favourite church of the Bentivogli, and the chapel which held Francia and Costa's frescoes of St. Cecilia, not far from the ancient leaning towers of Garisenda and Asinelli sung by Dante in his *Inferno*.

Here she spent the next four months, surrounded by her family and friends, and witnessed the memorable scenes which took place at Bologna in the course of that winter. The Pope arrived in the same week, after paying a visit to his old friend the Knight of S. John, Sabbà da Castiglione, in his quiet retreat at the house of his order, near Faenza. He entered Bologna in state, wearing the triple tiara, and borne on the *Sedia gestatoria*, with sixteen Cardinals in his train, but it was noticed how few acclamations greeted his coming, and scarcely a voice joined in the cry—*Viva Papa Clemente!* Charles V., on the contrary, received an enthusiastic welcome from the people, when, on the 5th of November, after sleeping at the convent of the Certosa outside the walls, he made his triumphal entry into the town. Isabella witnessed the solemn meeting between the Pope and monarch from a balcony opposite San Petronio, and on the next day wrote the following graphic account of the scene to her niece, Renée de France :—

“Dearest and most Illustrious Lady,—Yesterday His Cæsarean Majesty came from Castelfranco Bolog-

nese to the Certosa, one mile from Bologna, and was first of all received by the Governor (Uberto Gambarà) and his troops, and then by all those most reverend Cardinals, who had gone out to meet His Majesty with an infinite number of gentlemen. His Majesty spent the night at the Certosa with part of his suite, and those who could not find accommodation were lodged in Bologna, as well as the Monsignori who went out to salute him. To-day the entry into Bologna took place about two o'clock, in the following order. First of all came three companies of light horse bearing lances, all very well armed and mounted. Between them were the artillery and engineers, then fourteen companies of infantry, partly armed with cross-bows, and the rest with pikes and halberds—all very fine-looking men and well armed. In the midst of them was Signor Antonio de Leyva, unarmed, and carried in a chair by his servants, because he is crippled with gout, and truly there was in him—borne as he was by others—no less vigour and majesty than if he had been in the best of health and armed from head to foot. Behind these companies came the Burgundian horse, all clad in white armour, with velvet doublets of yellow, red, and green. After them rode another splendid company of light horse, armed with lances, and wearing cloth doublets of the same colours, and each Burgundian was followed by a page bearing his helmet and lance, mounted on a fine charger. Then came His Majesty's gentlemen-in-waiting; all in full armour, and doublets and mantles of different fashions and devices, according to their own taste and fancy. Behind these gentlemen came His Majesty's pages, wearing caps of yellow velvet, with velvet suits of these three

colours, yellow, grey, and purple, and they rode beautiful and graceful horses, jennets as well as others, all richly draped and harnessed.

“At this moment His Holiness descended from his palace, borne in his chair, in full pontifical robes, and surrounded by his chamberlains and gentlemen of the bedchamber. The Ambassadors and all the most reverend Cardinals went on foot before him, walking two and two at a time, followed by infinite numbers of bishops and clergy, and mounted a wooden tribunal which had been erected on the steps in front of the church of San Petronio, draped with white cloth. The floor under the feet of His Holiness and the Cardinals was covered with red cloth, and the other portions occupied by less exalted personages were draped with different coloured carpets. On the opposite side of the Piazza came the royal procession, led by His Majesty’s guards, all of them fine-looking men, wearing the same liveries as the court pages. Close behind them were Cæsar’s greatest and favourite courtiers on horseback, all armed, and wearing the richest doublets and mantles, which made a most beautiful and splendid show. Behind them, under a canopy of cloth of gold, borne by the chief citizens of Bologna, appeared His Cæsarean Majesty with one of his nobles—the Grand Marshal Don Alvarez, Marquis Astorga—bearing his drawn sword aloft before him. His Majesty rode a most beautiful white jennet, and wore a doublet and vest of gold brocade, and was in full armour, only his right arm and breast being uncovered. At his stirrup walked forty young nobles of Bologna in white satin doublets, lined and slashed with gold brocade, with white velvet caps and plumes and rose-coloured hose, who met him at the gate by

which His Majesty entered, and accompanied him on foot through the streets.

“When he reached the steps of San Petronio, His Majesty alighted and presented himself before His Holiness, who stood up to receive him, and after he had kissed his foot, hand, and lips, he was very tenderly embraced by the Holy Father, who made him take a seat on his right hand. The words which His Majesty said to His Holiness were these: ‘Padre sancto, soy venido a besar los piès de Vuestra Santidad, lo que es mucho tempo lo deseava, ayora lo compido co l’obra; suplico a Dios que sea en su servicio y de V.S.’ ‘Holy Father, I have come to kiss the feet of Your Holiness, an act which I have long wished to do, and am at length allowed to accomplish, and I pray God that this may be for the glory of His service and of that of Your Holiness.’ And these words were spoken by His Holiness in reply: ‘We thank God who has brought us to this day which we have so long desired to see, and hope that Your Majesty may be the means of gaining great things for the service of God and the good of Christendom.’ After this His Majesty rose to his feet and offered His Holiness a purse filled with gold pieces, among which were two of 100 ducats and a great many others, making in all a sum of 1000 ducats. Then all those who were with His Majesty on the tribunal kissed the feet of His Holiness the Pope. So they spent some time together, but had little opportunity for any private conversation. After that, they descended the steps, and Cæsar offered to conduct His Holiness back to the palace, but was induced by His Holiness to remain behind, and he entered San Petronio with four of the Cardinals,

Cesarini, Ravenna, Naples, and Ridolfi, who remained in attendance on His Majesty. His Holiness then returned to his rooms borne in his chair, and accompanied by the other Monsignori on foot. And while the Emperor alighted and knelt before the Pope, and entered San Petronio, the procession of his guards continued to advance, chiefly light horse and infantry with a great number of guns. And when he had offered thanks to our Lord God and performed the usual ceremonies, he walked, still on foot, between the Cardinals to the Palace, where his lodgings are prepared. I hear from those who have seen them, that they are so near those of His Holiness, that only a single wall divides one room from the other.

“This spectacle, *Madama mia*, seemed to me so splendid that I confess I have never before seen, and can never expect to see again, anything at all equal to it. And if I had tried to describe all its details to Your Excellency, I should have given you too much to read; but this I must tell you, that through all the streets where His Majesty passed, gold and silver coins were thrown to the people in token of rejoicing and princely liberality. It remains to us to implore God that the conference held by these two great lords who have met together here may produce those good results which we all desire, and lead to the restoration of universal peace in Christendom. I believe that Your Illustrious Highness will be informed of all these events, with perhaps even greater fulness, by your ambassador. None the less, to satisfy the request which was made to me a few days ago by one of your gentlemen here, I have tried to give you this account by letter.”¹

¹ D'Arco, *op. cit.*

The sight which Isabella had that day witnessed might well rouse her enthusiasm. There were many notable figures in the great procession that slowly wound its way through the ancient streets of Bologna. Close to the monarch's person rode the grandees of Spain, with their haughty bearing and gorgeous clothes, and chief among them the mighty soldier Leyva, under whose iron rule Milan groaned, borne high in his purple velvet litter on the shoulders of his servants. Cardinal Campeggio, the legate, was there, newly arrived from England, where he had been considering the vexed question of King Henry the Eighth's divorce; and Ippolito dei Medici, the youngest member of the Sacred College, whose strikingly handsome face and dark eyes are familiar to us from Titian's portrait, and must have reminded Isabella of his father, her old friend Giuliano. There was the aged Admiral Andrea Doria and the boy Marquis, Bonifazio of Monferrato, the last heir of that illustrious race of Paleologhi who had once reigned as Emperors in Constantinople. And there, too, were the German princes: the Count of Nassau, a magnificent-looking man, clad from head to foot in cloth of gold, Albert von Brandenburg, who claimed kinship with the Gonzagas, and the Count Palatine of the Rhine. But the most remarkable figure in all that splendid train, the one on whom all eyes were fixed that day, was Cæsar himself, this young monarch of twenty-nine, on whose dominions the sun never set, and who held the fate of Italy in the hollow of his hand. The spectators were deeply impressed with the lofty air and majestic bearing, the fair locks and beard and fine blue eyes of the young Emperor, and admired the stately

courtesy with which he doffed his black velvet cap to the ladies on the balconies and at the windows along the route. Isabella, who alone among them all had been present at the siege and sack of Rome, must have watched the meeting between Pope and Emperor with strangely-mingled feelings. The Pope, it was noticed, turned pale when Charles knelt before him, and the tears streamed down his cheeks as he bent down to salute the monarch. And when the Emperor inquired after his health, Clement replied that he had felt distinctly better since he left Rome—a remark which made some of the Spanish courtiers smile. But these sad days were over, and Cardinals and princes looked forward, like Isabella, with high hopes to the conferences that were to close the long tale of warfare and misery, and bring back peace and prosperity to distracted Italy.

CHAPTER XXXIX

1529—1530

Illustrious visitors to Bologna—Veronica Gambara and the humanists—Isabella's political objects—Ferrante Gonzaga seeks the hand of Isabella Colonna, who is already wedded to Luigi Rodomonte — Favour shown to the Marquis of Mantua—Francesco Sforza receives the investiture of Milan—Proclamation of universal peace—Florence alone excluded from the League—Fêtes and balls at Christmas and Carnival—Charles V. receives the iron crown of Lombardy and the golden crown of the Holy Roman Empire from the Pope's hands—Coronation in San Petronio—The Duke of Ferrara comes to Bologna, and is reconciled to the Pope.

DURING the next four months, all the most illustrious personages in Italy met at Bologna to assist at the Emperor's coronation or to pay him homage. When Isabella d'Este arrived, she found Veronica Gambara living in the Palazzo Marsilio with her brother Uberto, the Governor of Bologna, while her other brother, Brunoro, the Imperial Chamberlain, arrived with Charles V. The Emperor himself honoured this distinguished lady with frequent visits, and her house became the meeting-place of all the humanists and poets who met in Bologna that winter. Contarini was there already as Venetian ambassador, and in December, Bembo arrived from Padua. Trissino, now high in the favour of Clement VII., accompanied him from Rome, and had the honour of bearing his train at the coronation; while the historians, Paolo Giovio and the Florentine Guicciardini, were both in

attendance on His Holiness. The former availed himself of the Marchesa's presence to beg a favour of her, as we learn from the following letter which Isabella addressed to the Castellan, Gian Giacomo Calandra:—

“Zovan Jacopo,—Monsignor Paolo Jovio, being anxious to print some of his Dialogues, has begged us to help him in this laudable enterprise by giving him 70 reams of a kind of paper that is made in Mantua, as the messenger sent by him will explain. And we, who love Messer Paolo greatly for his excellent learning, would gladly do him this service. Accordingly we beg you to execute this commission for us, knowing how willingly you will take part in so honourable an undertaking, and ask you to see that the paper shall be given to his messenger. You can tell the papermakers that the cost of this paper will be defrayed as soon as I return to Mantua. If they make difficulties, give them 2 ducats a week, so that they may be completely satisfied, and our steward will provide the money. Messer Paolo asks to be allowed to bring this paper here from Mantua without payment of customs or any other tax, but I do not know if this can be managed, since all the taxes are already allotted.” Bologna, Nov. 21, 1529.

Meanwhile, Isabella's devoted servant, Gianfrancesco Valier, arrived from Venice with her son Ercole's friends, the poets Antonio Broccardo and Molza, who still addressed sonnets to the fair Camilla Gonzaga, now the wife of Count Alessandro di Porto of Vicenza, and Angelo Colocci, the beloved companion of Bembo's Roman days.¹ Once more the Marchesa welcomed these old friends under her roof,

¹ V. Cian, *Un Decennio*, &c., p. 148.

and renewed the pleasant meetings and literary discussions which she had held in Rome, and sighed with them over the ruin of the Eternal City.

But Isabella had graver cares than these to fill her time and thoughts. There were many important political questions to be settled by the Pope and Emperor in the private conferences which they held daily, and most of these concerned Isabella closely. Next in importance to the interests of her son Federico, were the affairs of Ferrara and Milan. There was the quarrel of her brother Alfonso with the Pope to be made up; and, although this clever prince had lost no opportunity of paying court to the Emperor, and kept his table supplied with game and venison, Clement was still implacable, and would not allow the Duke to enter Bologna. And there was the pardon of her unfortunate nephew to be obtained from the Emperor, who had not forgiven Francesco Sforza for taking up arms against him, and threatened to deprive him of his State. The Pope, however, espoused this unlucky prince's cause warmly, and before many days a message was sent to the Duke of Milan desiring his presence at Bologna.¹

Charles now proclaimed that he meant to restore peace to Italy, and invited all those who had grievances or complaints to come and obtain redress for their wrongs. First among those who responded to this invitation was the exiled Queen of Naples, Isabella del Balzo, the widow of Frederic II., and last representative of the proud line of Altamura. She

¹ Giordano, *Della venuta e dimora in Bologna del Sommo Pont. Clemente VII. per la Coronazione di Carlo V.*, 1530. All the details of the ceremony here given are supplied in this writer's carefully-compiled chronicle.

came from Ferrara, where she was living in great poverty, and, throwing herself at the Emperor's feet, begged him to have pity upon her two daughters. Charles received the widowed Queen with the courtesy due to her rank and misfortunes, and not only comforted her with promises of liberal help, but, before he left Italy, arranged a marriage between her elder daughter, the Infanta Giulia, and the Marquis Federico Gonzaga. Every day now brought fresh arrivals, and the picturesque streets of Bologna were thronged with gay cavalcades. On the 13th of November, the Prince of Orange arrived from the camp before Florence, to inform the Emperor of the determined resistance which the Republic offered, and ask for orders how to proceed. With him came Ferrante Gonzaga, bent on business of his own.¹ It was his intention to ask the Emperor for the hand of the great heiress, Isabella Colonna, whose father, Vespasiano, had died only two years after his marriage to Giulia Gonzaga, leaving his only child betrothed to the Pope's kinsman, Ippolito dei Medici. But the intended bridegroom soon abandoned his suit, having fallen in love with his affianced wife's beautiful step-mother Giulia, and before long his elevation to the Cardinalate put an end to his matrimonial schemes. Ferrante felt that this was a good opportunity to secure the hand of the rich heiress, and relied on the Emperor's marked favour and his mother's influence to obtain his wish. But he was too late in the field. After Vespasiano Colonna's death in March 1528, the Orsini took advantage of the general confusion in Rome and Apulia to seize his daughter's estates, and wage a desperate war against the Colonna

¹ Giordano, *op. cit.*

followers. Upon this, the Pope sent Giulia Gonzaga's own brother, Luigi Rodomonte, the gallant young captain who had protected him in his flight to Orvieto, to the help of these distressed ladies. After a hard-fought campaign, this brave knight succeeded in defeating the foe and recovering the castle of Palliano for the Colonnas. Antonia del Balzo's grandson was not only a man of great strength and stature, who could break ropes and horse-shoes in his hands, but a cultured and charming prince, a poet himself and the friend of poets.¹ The heiress promptly fell in love with this Paladin of romance who had come to her rescue, and, before the hero left Palliano, he was secretly married to Isabella Colonna. Fearing the Pope's anger, Giulia Gonzaga and her brother decided to keep the marriage secret, and Luigi returned to his post and marched against Florence with the Imperial army. But when he heard that his cousin Ferrante had asked for the hand of the heiress, he hastened to Bologna and produced his marriage contract as the best proof that Isabella was already his wife. After this there was nothing more to be said. The Pope and Emperor both declared the marriage to be valid, the hero received the congratulations of his friends, and, when the campaign against Florence was ended, he returned in triumph to Palliano and claimed his bride. Ferrante soon afterwards consoled himself with another wealthy Neapolitan heiress, Isabella of Capua, daughter of the Duca di Tremoli, whom he married in April 1531.²

On the 20th of November, the Marquis of

¹ Affò, *Vita di Luigi Rodomonte*, pp. 45, &c.

² Litta, *Famiglie*, *Tavola* xiv. ; M. Sanuto, *Diarii*, liv. 385.

Mantua himself entered Bologna with a splendid train of courtiers, and proceeded straight to the Palazzo Manzoli, where he was welcomed affectionately by his mother. The Pope's household rode out to meet him, and the Emperor honoured Federico with marks of especial favour, and invited him to occupy rooms close to his own. Before long, Charles V. graciously informed the Marchesa of his intention to raise her son to the rank of Duke, and further intimated his willingness to visit her at Mantua on his return to Germany. Isabella's highest ambition was thus gratified, and on the 15th of December, Federico left Bologna to make preparations for the fitting reception of his august guest.¹

Both Federico and his mother exerted all their influence with the Emperor on behalf of Francesco Sforza. This prince had never recovered from the dangerous wound which he had received from the conspirator, Bonifazio Visconti, six years before. He could only travel in a litter, and when he reached Bologna on the 22nd of November, he was still so weak that he could not stand in the Emperor's presence. But Charles received him kindly, and it was noticed by the Duke's friends, as a good omen, that he spoke to him in German, a language which his enemy, Leyva, could not understand, and looked at Francesco with a smile, while the grim Spanish general stood sullenly by. After prolonged conferences, the Duke finally received the investiture of Milan, on payment of an enormous tribute, which his unhappy subjects, already ruined by war and famine, were

¹ M. Sanuto, *op. cit.*, lii. 376.

utterly unable to raise, and Leyva was granted the city of Pavia for his life. The Venetian envoy, Contarini, was next admitted to the Emperor's presence, and terms of peace between the Signory and the Pope were arranged. On Christmas Eve a treaty drawn up by the Imperial Chancellor, Cardinal Gattinara, was signed by the Pope, the Emperor, Venice, Milan, Mantua, Savoy, and Monferrato. The Duke of Ferrara's name was inserted in the treaty by the Emperor's express wish, but the final settlement of his quarrel with the Pope was deferred to a future date. Only Florence was excluded from the League, and the unfortunate deputies who had been sent to plead her cause were not even allowed to enter the Emperor's presence.

"Now indeed," exclaimed Cardinal Pucci, "we can sing the Gloria with the angels, since peace and goodwill are restored to men."

The Emperor attended midnight mass in the papal chapel, and received the Sword with the Dove of the Holy Spirit which the Pope had blessed, and himself chanted the first words of the Gospel, "In that time an edict went forth from Augustus that all the world should be taxed." Isabella d'Este and all the illustrious guests who were by this time assembled in Bologna, were present at the solemn mass at San Petronio on Christmas Day, when the Pope was the celebrant, and gave the Emperor the kiss of peace. On the last day of the year, the papal bull proclaiming a general peace was publicly read from the steps of the Palazzo Pubblico, and a solemn *Te Deum* was chanted, after which the Duke of Milan and all the great feudatories of the

Emperor and the Church, succeeded by the foreign ambassadors and princes, kissed the Pope's feet.¹

On the 18th of January, the Emperor received a deputation from the University of Bologna, and conferred the title of Mother of Universities, together with many new privileges, on this ancient foundation. On the same day the poet, Girolamo di Casio, Isabella's old friend, received the laurel crown from the hands of the Emperor and the Pope. On the 25th, a magnificent embassy of Venetian senators, clad in trailing robes of black velvet and gold togas, and wearing massive gold chains, arrived in Bologna, and rode through the city followed by youths bearing large bowls filled with golden crowns which they presented to the Emperor, who received them in great state seated on his throne in the Sala Grande. From Christmas till the end of the carnival, a series of banquets, jousts, masquerades, and balls were given by the Marchesa Isabella, Veronica Gambara, and other august persons. Charles himself was often present on these occasions, and spoke graciously to the illustrious guests, and won golden opinions by his courtesy to all the ladies present.

Unfortunately these festive gatherings did not always tend to peace. As before at Milan, the Spanish and Italian cavaliers quarrelled over the bright eyes of Isabella's maids-of-honour, and more than once their revelries ended in bloodshed. The Spanish nobles were also very ready to quarrel with the German lords, and on the last day of the year, when peace was publicly proclaimed in San Petronio, Alfonso d'Avalos, the proud young Marchese del Vasto, caught sight of a simply clad

¹ Giordano, *op. cit.*

man standing near him and pushed him violently away. He was told to his surprise that this was a German prince, a brother of the Duke of Würtemberg, upon which he declined to apologise, saying that a nobleman of his rank ought to know better than to appear at court in such mean attire.¹ The haughty airs of these Castilian grandees and the readiness of their servants to take offence constantly led to brawls with the citizens of Bologna, while the German *landsknechte* plundered the shops, and one evening a troop of Lutheran soldiers threw down a statue of Pope Clement and burnt the head on their camp fire. But Charles V. and his chief captains did their utmost to restrain these excesses, and the Emperor himself set an example of courtesy and kindly toleration to all. His simple habits and refined tastes quickly won the hearts of the few Italian princes who were admitted to his intimacy. He generally devoted the mornings to private conferences with the Pope or his Chancellor, but spent the afternoons in visiting the oldest and most interesting churches in the city, and examining the frescoes and paintings with which they were adorned. As a rule, he took these expeditions on foot, clad in his plain suit and cap of black velvet, and attended only by a few courtiers. Sometimes he was accompanied by the Marquis of Mantua, and more often by his favourite, Alfonso d'Avalos, Marquis del Vasto, the cousin of Vittoria Colonna's dead husband. On fine days the Emperor would ride out to S. Michele in Bosco, or other points of interest in the neighbourhood, and admire the fine views from the hills round Bologna.

¹ Reumont, *Rom.*, p. 246.

At length all the preparations for the great ceremony of the double Coronation were complete, and on the 22nd of February, Charles V. received the iron crown, which had been sent from Monza by order of the Duke of Milan, from the Pope's hands. A Flemish Cardinal, Wilhelm Enckefort, the friend and companion of Adrian VI., who had paid 40,000 crowns for his ransom in the sack of Rome, and still wore his beard long in sign of mourning, anointed the monarch, and administered the communion to him on this occasion, while the Spanish Grand Marshal Astorga bore the royal sceptre, and the Marquis of Monferrato presented the iron crown to the Pope. That afternoon the Duke and Duchess of Urbino entered Bologna in state. Francesco Maria had led the armies of the League against the Emperor for several years, but as Captain-General of the Venetians and of the Church, he was now received with the highest honours. Both the Pope and Emperor sent their households to meet him, and all the illustrious visitors assembled to greet the Duke and Duchess. No General had made greater blunders or been more unfortunate in his campaigns. But on this occasion his martial air, and that of the captains who rode beside him, as well as the remarkable beauty of Leonora, excited general admiration.

On the 23rd, the Emperor's brother-in-law, Charles, Duke of Savoy, arrived, as well as the King of Hungary's ambassador, the Bishop of Trent, accompanied by a suite of Hungarian nobles, whose blazing jewels and costumes of barbaric splendour attracted much attention.¹

¹ Giordano, *op. cit.*

The Feast of St. Matthias, being the Emperor's birthday and the anniversary of the victory of Pavia, had been chosen for the great function. The morning broke clear and bright after a night of heavy rain, and all the bells in Bologna rang joyous peals from early dawn. One of the first to be up and stirring was Antonio de Leyva, who ordered his servants to carry him in a litter to the Piazza in front of San Petronio, and himself superintended the disposal of the Italian, Spanish, and German guards who were to line the streets. The artillery was drawn up in the square, and the guards at the city gate were doubled. A wooden bridge was erected between the Palazzo and the church, hung with sky-blue draperies and wreathed with garlands of flowers, of myrtle and laurel boughs, and a double file of tall Burgundian soldiers, the flower of the German army, guarded this gallery, along which the Pope and Emperor passed into San Petronio. First came the doctors of the University, in their fur collars and gold chains, and the rector in his purple robes. Then the archbishops and bishops, wearing their mitres and violet copes, and the cardinals in scarlet, preceding the Pope, who was borne on the *Sedia gestatoria*, hung with cloth of gold, by the Papal grooms in red liveries. His Holiness wore the triple tiara, and his golden cope was fastened by a marvellous jewel with a representation of God the Father in glory, engraved by Benvenuto Cellini, and containing the famous diamond worn by Charles the Bold at Nancy, and afterwards the property of Lodovico Sforza and Pope Julius II.¹

Then a mighty flourish of trumpets announced the coming of Cæsar. Before him came heralds

¹ B. Cellini, *Trattato*, p. 50.

from all parts of his vast dominions, from Naples and Sicily, Austria and Burgundy, Spain and Navarre, and ambassadors from France, England, Scotland, Hungary, Bohemia, Poland, Portugal, and the different states of Italy. Four great officers of state followed—the young Marquis of Monferrato clad in scarlet velvet robes trimmed with ermine, bore the royal sceptre; Philip, Duke of Bavaria and Count Palatine, robed in purple, carried the orb of the world; the Duke of Urbino, wearing crimson satin robes and peaked ermine cap, held the sword of state as Prefect of Rome. Last of all, the Duke of Savoy, as Vicar of the Empire, clad in a magnificent robe of purple, embroidered with gold and silver, and glittering with jewels, bore the Imperial diadem on a golden cushion. After these, escorted by a chosen suite of Spanish grandees and Neapolitan nobles, among whom the Grand Marshal Astorga and the Viceroy of Naples, Don Pedro de Toledo, were conspicuous, came the Emperor-elect, wearing a flowing mantle of gold brocade over his Imperial robes, and the iron crown of Lombardy on his head. The procession was delayed for some minutes by a violent quarrel for precedence between the Genoese and Sienese ambassadors, who “from high words passed to blows and cuffs,” and just as the Emperor set foot in the church, the wooden bridge collapsed with a sudden crash. Great alarm was excited, and many of the guards were badly shaken and bruised, but no serious injury was done, and Charles preserved the most complete presence of mind, “confident,” writes Paolo Giovio, “in his own good fortune.”¹

Then the imposing ceremony began. All the

¹ Giordano, *op. cit.*

elaborate ritual of mediæval days was fully observed. The Emperor took the oath of defender and protector of the Church on the Book of the Gospels, was consecrated as a deacon, and received holy unction from Cardinal Farnese at the high altar, after which the Pope solemnly invested him with the Imperial insignia. "*Accipe gladium sanctum*," were the words pronounced when the sword was fastened to his side; "*Accipe virgam*" and "*Accipe pomum*," were said as the sceptre and orb were delivered into his hands; and "*Accipe signum gloriæ!*" when at length the golden diadem was placed upon his brow. The Emperor kissed the Pope's feet and took his seat on the throne, two steps lower than the Papal chair, while the heralds proclaimed in a loud voice: "Emperor of the Romans and Lord of the whole world." "*Romanorum Imperator semper augustus, mundi totius Dominus, universis Dominis, universis Principibus et Populis semper venerandus*." Then a great shout arose from the assembled multitude, "*Vivat Carolus Imperator! Evviva Carlo Cesare!*" The tumult of acclamations drowned the sound of the trumpets, and the noise of guns and bells told the crowds assembled in the streets and on the roofs, that the solemn act was completed, and that a Roman Emperor had once more received the crown from the hands of the Vicar of Christ.

The newly-crowned Cæsar received communion devoutly, and, after shaking hands with the Pope, held the stirrup while His Holiness mounted his grey Barbary horse at the foot of the steps leading down to the Piazza. Then Charles in his turn mounted the white charger, superbly draped with pearl brocade, which was led up by Prince Doria and the Duke

of Urbino, and rode at the Pope's side under a baldacchino, supported by the chief doctors and nobles of Bologna. So the great procession wound slowly through the gaily-decorated streets, while from roofs, windows, and balconies rang the same mighty cry: "*Viva Carlo V.! Imperator gloriosissimus!*"

On his return to the Palace, Charles retired for a brief interval of sorely needed rest after the fatigue of the long ceremony, and then sat down to the banquet prepared in the Sala Grande. According to ancient custom, the Emperor sat alone at the high table, while the chief cardinals and princes who had taken part in the ceremony were immediately below, and sixty other illustrious guests were entertained in the adjoining hall. At the end of the banquet, Charles drank to the Pope's health, and Cardinal Ippolito dei Medici, in the name of His Holiness, toasted the Empress and her infant son, the Prince of Spain. Afterwards the Emperor received the congratulations of his courtiers, while his chamberlains flung gilded and coloured confetti to the crowds on the brilliantly-illuminated Piazza below. Several Italian princes of high rank and station were, it was remarked, absent from the ceremony. The Duke of Milan was too ill to bear the fatigue; Prince Ferrante of Salerno was affronted that, although a kinsman of the Emperor, he had not been chosen to take part in the ceremony; and Federico Gonzaga excused himself from being present because he was making preparations to receive the Emperor at Mantua.

On the 26th, an ox was roasted on the Piazza, and the soldiers on duty were feasted at the expense of the city of Bologna. On Sunday the 27th, the Emperor attended high mass in state at S. Giovanni

del Monte, and afterwards carefully examined Raphael's St. Cecilia and the fine altar-pieces by Francia, Costa, and Perugino, with which this church was then adorned. The same evening he invited twenty great ladies, among whom were Isabella d'Este, her daughter Leonora, and Veronica Gambara, to a dance in his rooms, and sent them all costly presents on the following morning. During the last days of carnival a series of brilliant fetes, masques, comedies, and balls were held. But the citizens of Bologna could no longer endure the daily insults which they received from the Spanish soldiers, and Count Pepoli, determined to put an end to their insolence, took upon himself to punish some of the most notorious offenders. A serious tumult followed, in which many lives were lost, and Antonio de Leyva complained angrily to the Pope of the affronts offered by his subjects to the Imperial guards. Fortunately, Charles intervened, and wisely ordered the Spanish troops to leave the town and encamp outside the walls.

On the 4th of March, the octave of the Coronation, the Emperor entertained all the princes and prelates at a grand banquet, and at five o'clock that evening rode out, attended by several of his chief guests, to meet his sister-in-law, Beatrice of Portugal, Duchess of Savoy. The arrival of this princess, whose beauty and charm made her a great favourite with the Emperor, created a marked sensation. She rode a white horse, draped with gold brocade, wearing a robe of mulberry-coloured satin, trimmed with gold fringe, a black velvet cap with drooping white plumes, and a pearl necklace hanging down to her waist, while her hair was caught up by a jewelled

fillet. In her train came eighteen fair maids-of-honour, riding white horses and wearing the same black velvet caps and white feathers, and thirty mules, with scarlet trappings, led by pages in red liveries. The Venetian envoys were profoundly impressed both by the loveliness of the young Duchess and by the courtesy and gallantry of the Emperor, who himself escorted his sister-in-law to her house.

At the same time they were much struck by the small stature and ungainly appearance of her husband, Duke Charles of Savoy. "She is tall and very beautiful, and appears to be about twenty-two years of age; he is small and ugly, and nearer fifty than forty."¹

The Duchess took up her abode in the Palazzo Pepoli, close to Isabella d'Este's quarters, and during the next fortnight her rooms became the meeting-place of all the chief personages in Bologna. Charles V. paid his charming sister-in-law frequent visits, and at his request she repeatedly invited the Duke and Duchess of Urbino to meet him. Leonora's majestic beauty made a great impression on the Emperor, and he visited her in the Palazzo Rossi and held long conferences with Francesco Maria, whose opinion on military matters he valued highly in spite of his ill-success in the recent campaign. Before leaving Bologna he offered the Duke the chief command of the Imperial armies; but Francesco Maria declined the honour, saying that he was pledged to the service of the Venetian Signory, who courteously told the Emperor that they were unable to spare him. Last of all, after dark, on the night of

¹ M. Sanuto, *Diarii*, liii. 45.

the 7th of March, the Duke of Ferrara arrived in Bologna. The Pope had reluctantly consented to give him a safe-conduct, at the urgent request of the Emperor, who on his part welcomed Alfonso warmly, and invited him to assist that evening at the performance of a comedy composed by a Lucchese poet. During the next fortnight Charles V. succeeded in effecting a reconciliation between the Pope and the Duke, by which Alfonso was allowed to retain Modena and Reggio, on payment of large sums of money both to the Emperor and the Church. Charles appears to have found Alfonso a very pleasant companion, and afterwards declared that the Duke of Ferrara was the wisest and wittiest prince in Italy. They often rode out together, and one day Charles took the Duke to visit the shop of Fra Damiano da Bergamo, the celebrated worker in *intarsiatura*. "Who is there?" asked the friar when the Emperor knocked at the door. "Charles of Austria," was the reply, upon which Fra Damiano opened the door promptly, but closed it again as quickly, on seeing the Emperor's companion. Charles asked him with a smile why he refused to admit the Duke of Ferrara. "Because," replied the artist, "His Excellency makes me pay such exorbitant tolls on the iron carving tools which I buy at Ferrara." Both Emperor and Duke greeted this reply with laughter, and when Alfonso had seen Fra Damiano's work, he promised to let him have his tools free of customs in future, and was presented with a fine *intarsia* by the grateful artist.

After this Isabella d'Este had every reason to be satisfied with the result of the conferences at Bologna. Her brother and nephew had made their peace with

the Pope and Emperor, her daughter and son-in-law had received the highest honours from Charles V., and now the Emperor was about to bestow a last and crowning mark of his favour upon her eldest son. On the 17th of March the Duchess of Savoy gave a brilliant fête at the Palazzo Pepoli, to which the Marchesa Isabella, the Dukes of Ferrara and Milan, and the Duke and Duchess of Urbino were all invited. The Emperor was present during two hours, and conversed pleasantly with some of the ladies in one saloon, while music and dancing went on in the other rooms. But after his departure, the Savoyard courtiers, resenting the insolence of some of the Spanish nobles who took liberties with the Duchess's lovely maids-of-honour, drew their swords, and three Spaniards were killed and seven of the Bolognese servants wounded. According to some accounts¹ Isabella d'Este's ladies were mixed up in this quarrel. Giordano says that no less than eighteen Spaniards were slain in the riot, and that, so much annoyed was the Marchesa by these scandals, that she left Bologna the next day.² On the other hand, Signor Renier declares this to be an exaggeration, and says that the true cause of Isabella's hurried departure for Mantua, was the need she felt of rest and change of air after the fatigues of these prolonged festivities. But, in any case, she left Bologna on the 21st of March, after taking the most cordial farewell of His Imperial Majesty, and receiving the Papal benediction for herself and her whole family.³

The Duke of Milan, who had also made a very

¹ Renier, *Italia*, p. 16.

² Giordano, *op. cit.*, and D'Arco in *Arch. St.*, App. ii.

³ Fontana, *Renée de France*, p. 66.

favourable impression on Charles V. and greatly improved his position, took his leave at the same time with the Duke and Duchess of Savoy; while the Duke of Ferrara hastened to Modena to receive the Emperor on his way to Mantua.

CHAPTER XL

1530—1531

Charles V. at Mantua—The Marquis Federico created Duke, and betrothed to the Infanta Giulia—Capture of Florence by Ferrante Gonzaga—Isabella goes to Venice—Titian employed by the Duke to paint a Magdalen for Vittoria Colonna—Death of Bonifazio, Marquis of Monferrato—Federico breaks off his contract with Donna Giulia, and asks for the hand of Maria di Monferrato—Death of this Princess—Federico asks for her sister Margherita's hand—Goes to Casale for the wedding—Giulio Romano adds new rooms to the Castello—Isabella superintends their decoration, and receives the bride.

ON the Feast of the Annunciation—the 25th of March—the Emperor entered Mantua in state. He was sumptuously clad in gold and silver brocade, and wore the sword and cap of Empire with which he had been invested at Bologna. At his side rode the Papal legates, Cardinals Cibo and Ippolito dei Medici, and immediately behind was the Duke of Ferrara, who had escorted him on his journey from Modena. Federico Gonzaga rode out to receive his illustrious guest as far as the Porta Pradella, accompanied by the Marchese del Vasto, who had been at Mantua for some days, and all his own valiant kinsmen. Fifty noble youths, clad in white, and bearing long silver staves in their hands, carried a white satin baldacchino over the Emperor's head as he rode through the crowded streets, under a series of triumphal arches designed by Giulio Romano.¹

¹ M. Sanuto, liii. 80–108.

The utmost ingenuity had been expended on these decorations. Each arch was adorned with groups of gods and goddesses, and inscribed with Greek and Latin verses. Mars and Venus, Mercury and Pallas, saluted Caesar in the words of Virgil and in the name of Mantua. On the Piazza di San Pietro a colossal Victory held a crown of laurel over the Emperor's head. The procession paused at the gates of the Duomo, and Charles entered the church to receive the Bishop's benediction, after which he crossed the Piazza to the Castello gates, where the Marchesa Isabella was waiting at the foot of the grand staircase to welcome him to the ancestral palace of the Gonzagas.¹

Here Charles spent the next four weeks, enjoying a brief respite from public business and State functions. He accompanied the Marquis on a series of hunting parties, which had been planned on a splendid scale. On Sunday the 27th, as many as 5000 riders joined in the sport, and 1000 guests were entertained at a banquet at Marmirolo, that superb palace on which Giulio Romano had lavished all the treasures of his luxuriant fancy. After dinner the Emperor joined in a game of *palla*, and slew a wild boar with his own hand in the hunt that followed. But the same day His Majesty nearly met with a serious accident. He was pursuing a wounded stag, when his horse came into violent collision with that of the young Cardinal Ippolito. Both riders were thrown to the ground, and Ippolito dei Medici received a severe blow; "so that," as the Venetian, Marco Antonio Venier, wrote, "one stag, in seeking to avoid death, almost

¹ G. Daŕno, *Cronaca*, in *Arch. St.*, App. ii. p. 232.

caused the death of an Emperor and a Cardinal." Fortunately, no serious harm was done, and Charles V. expressed the greatest delight with his day's sport. During the next fortnight he visited the palaces and villas of the Gonzagas, and enjoyed the refined luxury and high culture of an Italian court. He saw the treasures of Isabella's Grotta, the famous armoury in the Corte Vecchia, the triumphs of Mantegna in the palace of S. Sebastiano, and the wonderful frescoes of the story of Psyche, which Giulio Romano had painted in Federico's new Palazzo del Tè. But, more than any of these, he admired the portraits and Holy Families painted by Titian, the great Venetian master, who was to become his chosen artist in days to come.

It was a proud hour in Isabella's life, and she did the honours of her son's house and entertained her august guest with all her wonted grace. But her proudest moment was on the 8th of April, when, after signing the deed creating the marquisate of Mantua into a duchy, by virtue of his Imperial authority, and sealing it with a gold seal, the Emperor publicly proclaimed Federico Duke of Mantua from the steps of S. Pietro, in the presence of a large and enthusiastic assembly.¹ On the same spot, a hundred years before, another Roman emperor, Sigismund, had proclaimed the present Duke's ancestor, Giovanni Francesco, first Marquis of Mantua. Many, indeed, had been the perils and troubles through which the little State had passed, and great was the glory and prosperity to which the noble house of Gonzaga had attained. This, Isabella felt, was the crowning triumph of her long

¹ G. Daïno, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

life, the reward of her unwearied labours and passionate devotion to her family and country.

On the following morning, the betrothal of the new Duke of Mantua with his cousin, the Infanta Giulia of Aragon, was solemnised in the presence of Cæsar. The Imperial Chancellor, Cardinal Gattinara, placed the ring on the bridegroom's hand, and blessed another ring, which the Duke of Ferrara was charged to deliver to the princess. Alfonso took leave of the Emperor the next morning, and on Holy Thursday Charles V. retired to the Convent of S. Benedetto, a few miles out of the town, and spent the next three days in devout exercises. On Tuesday in Easter week, the 19th of April, he finally left Mantua, and was escorted by his host as far as Goito, on his way to Trent.¹ The Imperial visit had passed off in the most successful manner, and Isabella could look back with complete satisfaction on these splendid and memorable days. Fortunately she did not know that these events, in which she saw the fulfilment of her fondest hopes, were in reality downward steps in the history of Mantua and of Italy, and that the Spanish rule would prove ere long the ruin of all that made life good and beautiful in her eyes. Four months after Charles V. left Mantua, the city of Florence surrendered to Ferrante Gonzaga, who had succeeded to the command of the Imperial armies on the death of the Prince of Orange, and the last bulwark of Italian independence was swept away.

In May, Isabella went to Venice, and spent several weeks there, enjoying change of air and rest. After all the expenses of the fêtes at Bologna and

¹ M. Sanuto, liii. 154.

Mantua, the Marchesa found herself very short of money, and when, in June, she wished to make some purchases before leaving Venice, she was compelled to write in great haste to her treasurer, Paolo Andreassi, begging him to send her 100 ducats on the spot. Here she saw Titian, who was engaged on several works for the Duke, and went to Bologna at his request in July, to paint the portrait of a fair lady whose bright eyes had captivated the Emperor's secretary, Covos. On the 19th of June Isabella returned to Mantua, and soon afterwards received a letter from the painter, expressing his regret that he had been unable to pay her a farewell visit before she left Venice, and saying that he had almost finished the little "travelling" picture which she had ordered. At the same time, he begged the Marchesa to use her influence with the Duke on behalf of his son Pomponio, for whom he was anxious to obtain the benefice of Medola.¹ This request was readily granted by Federico, and the promise of this rich benefice proved a sensible consolation in the loss which Titian suffered by the sudden death of his wife Cecilia. "Messer Tiziano," wrote the Mantua envoy, Benedetto Agnello, on the 4th of October, "is recovering his spirits, and hopes soon to come to Mantua." Whether he visited Mantua or not that autumn, he certainly executed several commissions for the Duke during the winter.

One of these, in which Isabella took especial interest, was a Magdalen, which Federico intended as a gift to Vittoria Colonna, Marchesa di Pescara. On the 11th of March, the Duke wrote the following letter to this accomplished lady, for whom he and all his

¹ Crowe e Cavalcaselle, *Titian*, i. 343.

family entertained so true a regard: "I hear from Signor Fabrizio Maramaldo that you desire to have a beautiful picture of S. Mary Magdalen by the hand of an excellent painter. I sent to Venice at once, and wrote to Titian, who is perhaps the best master now living, and is altogether devoted to me, begging him earnestly to make a picture of this saint, as beautiful and tearful as possible, and to let me have it directly."¹ Titian, in his anxiety to gratify this generous patron, put all his other work aside to begin the new picture, which was already well advanced by the 22nd of March, and seemed, in Agnello's opinion, to be a work of the highest excellence. On the 19th, Isabella wrote to Agnello, saying how glad she and her son were to hear that M. Tiziano had begun the Magdalen, adding, that the sooner it arrived, the better they would be pleased. Again, on the 8th of April, she wrote to the envoy: "We hear from the Castellano, Gian Giacomo Calandra, that the picture of the Magdalen which Titian is painting is nearly finished. We are delighted to hear this, and beg you to thank M. Tiziano for the pains and promptitude with which he has served us, although we know that he could not well do otherwise. And since we desire to have the picture immediately, we send a courier to Venice forthwith, in order that he may bring it back with him. Please have the canvas carefully packed and covered up, so that it cannot suffer injury, with the lightest material you can find, in order that he may carry it with him; and make all the necessary arrangements to prevent any delay at the custom-house, and that he may be allowed to bring it free of charge."²

¹ Crowe e Cavalcaselle, *op. cit.*, i. App.

² Gaye, *Carteggio*, ii. 225.

The picture was ready, but had to be kept two days longer to allow the varnish to dry. On the 14th of April it was finally despatched to Mantua with a letter from the painter, saying that he had put his whole strength into the work. "If only my hand and brush," he adds, "had agreed with the greatness of my dream, the result would have satisfied me better; but this, alas! has not been the case by a long way, and a great space still remains between my aspiration and my achievement. The Magdalen herself has promised to beg your forgiveness with hands folded on her breast."¹

Both the Duke and his mother were, however, delighted with the picture, and Federico wrote in glowing terms to thank the painter.

"M. Tiziano,—I have received the picture of the Magdalen, which you have painted for us, and which I quite expected to be a beautiful thing, knowing that nothing else could proceed from your hand, because of your excellence in painting, and all the more, because you were doing the work for me, whom I know you like to please. But I find it far more perfect and beautiful than I ever expected, and, truly, of all the pictures which I have ever seen, I do not remember one which seems to me more beautiful. I am indeed more than satisfied. And Madama Illustrissima, my mother, says the same, pronouncing it to be a most admirable work, and confessing that it is equal to the finest pictures of the kind which she has seen and enjoyed. And these, as you know, are very many. Every one who sees it says the same, and the best judges of painting praise it the most. Thus I recognise that in this magnificent work you have

¹ Gaye, *op. cit.*, ii. 226.

tried to express at once the love which you cherish for me and your own rare excellence. These two things have enabled you to produce this incomparable figure, which is so beautiful that it is impossible to desire anything finer. I cannot say how grateful I feel, and can only assure you that I shall never forget this and all the other pleasure which you have given me, and shall ever remain at your service."¹ Mantua, April 19, 1531.

The Magdalen was forwarded, without delay, to Vittoria Colonna, who expressed the warmest gratitude for the priceless gift, and sent the Duke an exquisitely-wrought casket filled with rare perfumes and cosmetic of roses. In his letter of thanks Federico replied that he would not fail to tell Titian how much Vittoria admired his picture, since this would doubtless incite him to fresh efforts, and if his art should attain a new perfection in the future, it would be her doing.² Isabella and all her children, more especially Leonora and Ercole, were deeply attached to Vittoria Colonna; but, in this instance, the Duke and his mother had a further motive for their anxiety to gratify her. It was, they felt, of the utmost importance to secure the goodwill of her nephew, the all-powerful Alfonso d'Avalos, in certain delicate matters regarding Federico's marriage.

Before the Emperor left Mantua the betrothal of Federico with the Infanta Giulia had been formally announced. Charles V. promised the bride a dowry of 50,000 ducats, and the marriage contract was drawn up, to the great delight of the widowed Queen of Naples. In the weekly letters which Isabella re-

¹ Gaye, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

² Luzio, *Rivista Mantovana*, i. 3-8.

ceived from Ferrara, we find frequent allusions to her future daughter-in-law, who now bore the title of Duchess of Mantua. The novelist Stabellino, writing to the Marchesa on the 22nd of May, describing a fête given by Renée de France in the beautiful hall of the Schifanoia Palace, remarks: "The Duchess danced hand in hand with the daughters of the Queen of Naples, and Don Ercole with Madame de Soubise's daughter. Then Don Francesco d'Este led out the Infanta Giulia, and many others followed dancing, and talking sweetly of love." The usual minute particulars of the princess's dress and appearance follow.¹ But greatly as Isabella desired her son's marriage, she does not appear to have felt much satisfaction with the bride whom the Emperor had chosen. The Infanta was considerably over thirty years of age, and the Marchesa may well have felt some misgivings with regard to the marriage, especially while the Duke's mistress, Isabella Boschetti, still retained her old empire over him.

Suddenly an unexpected event altered the whole aspect of affairs. The young Marquis of Monferrato, who had so lately played an important part in the imperial Coronation, was killed by a fall from his horse when he was out hunting, one day in June. He was succeeded by his uncle, Bishop Giovanni Giorgio, an elderly and infirm prince, who was in deacon's orders. Since he had never married, and was likely to remain childless, his elder niece, Maria Paleologa, the very princess who had formerly been affianced to Federico Gonzaga, now became heiress to the rich principality of Monferrato. Both Isabella d'Este and the widowed Marchesa of Monferrato had

¹ Fontana, *Renée de France*, p. 144.

always wished for this marriage, and now the Duke himself was equally anxious to obtain the hand of the bride whom he had once rejected. He lost no time in renewing his suit, and sent envoys to the Emperor and the Pope begging to be released from his engagement to the Infanta, on the ground of a previous contract, and the scruples which he felt with regard to marriage with a first cousin. A conference was held at Mantua, in which the chief lawyers and ecclesiastics of the State unanimously gave their opinion in favour of the validity of the first contract, and the Duke's subjects presented him with a petition, begging him to repudiate the Infanta and marry Maria Paleologa, who, being younger, would be more likely to bear him an heir. In the midst of these negotiations the poor young princess Maria died after a few days' illness on the 25th of September 1530. The Duke at once proclaimed a general mourning for his wife, and promptly asked the Marchesa di Monferrato for the hand of her only surviving daughter, Margherita. This princess, who had just entered her twentieth year, now found herself courted by the most exalted personages. The Emperor pressed the suit of the Count Palatine, the King of France tried to secure the hand of the heiress for his second son, while the Marchesa di Monferrato herself was anxious to marry her daughter to the Duke of Milan. But as usual the Gonzagas triumphed, and Isabella had her way. The Pope was induced to annul the contract with the Infanta in March 1531, and although Charles V. still tried to persuade Federico to fulfil his pledges and take Giulia of Aragon for his bride, he at length recognised further opposition to be useless, and gave his consent to the Duke's marriage with Margherita

Paleologa. On the 26th of July the contract was finally signed at Casale, and congratulations flowed in from all sides.

Bernardo Tasso composed an Epithalamium in honour of the happy event, Vittoria Colonna sent the most cordial good wishes, with two of her latest sonnets from the island of Ischia, and Paolo Giovio wrote from Rome that this illustrious lady was so genuinely attached to the Duke, that she could not wish her own Marchese del Vasto greater joy and good fortune.¹

Titian received a letter from Federico himself informing him of his marriage, and wrote on the 31st of July, to congratulate his noble patron in the warmest terms: "My dear Lord,—I cannot express, either by words or writing, how great was my delight on receiving the letter which you were so kind and gracious as to send me, and which confirmed and explained what I had already heard of Your Excellency's most happy marriage. This news has filled me with the most unbounded joy, so that I can hardly contain myself. And I pray that our Lord God may keep you, and give you all prosperity, and fulfil all your desires for infinite years to come."² The Duke in his letter informed Titian that the benefice of Medola and its revenues had been formally granted to his son, a fact which added not a little to the painter's satisfaction.

This time Federico was determined that no unnecessary delay should hinder his marriage, and he prevailed on the Marchesa di Monferrato to allow the wedding to take place early in October.

¹ Luzio in *Rivista Mantovana*, i. 3-8.

² Crowe e Cavalcaselle, *Titian*, i. App.

Early in the last week of September, he set out from Mantua, with a brilliant suite, which included his kinsmen, the ambassador Francesco Gonzaga, l'Abate Lodovico, and his younger son, Gianfrancesco Cagnino, the Count of Caiazzo, who had married a daughter of Pirro Gonzaga, and his favourite, Count Nicola Maffei, as well as the papal legate and imperial ambassador. The party travelled by road to Pavia, where they spent Sunday night in the bishop's palace, and were met by two envoys from Casale. On Monday morning, after hearing mass, the Duke went out on a hunting expedition with Count Maximilian Stampa, and spent the night at Vigevano with his cousin, the Duke of Milan. "This illustrious Duke," wrote the secretary who sent Isabella a full account of her son's wedding journey, "rode out with all his court to meet our Signor, and received him in the most kind and honourable manner. Indeed, as long as we were in the dominions of the Lord Duke, we were exceedingly well treated, and could not have been more royally entertained."¹ Francesco now announced his intention of accompanying his cousin to Casale for the wedding, and on Tuesday, after another hunting expedition, the two princes, accompanied by the redoubtable Antonio de Leyva and twenty-five Milanese nobles, reached Casale. The old Marquis of Monferrato received the bridegroom outside the city gates, and Federico entered the town on horseback between his host and the Duke of Milan, attended by an escort of a thousand men. As soon as he reached the Castello, he was conducted into the presence of the Marchesa, who

¹ M. Sanuto, *Diarii*, lv. 38.

was ill in bed. "And so great was the crowd," writes the Mantuan secretary, "at the doors of her bedroom, that I, who had gone in with my Signor, found it quite impossible to get out again." A magnificent suite of apartments, the first hung with gold brocade and green velvet, the second with silver brocade, tan-coloured velvet and turquoise satin, and the third with gold and silver brocade, had been prepared for the Duke of Mantua, close to the Princess Margherita's rooms. Federico, however, insisted that his cousin, the Duke of Milan, must occupy these apartments, and the door which led into the bride's chamber was hastily sealed up. But Francesco, not to be outdone in courtesy, quite refused to occupy the bridegroom's rooms, declaring that he had come to the wedding uninvited, simply out of affection for his cousin.

The wedding took place that same evening in the Marchesa's bedroom. Antonio de Leyva was carried in by his servants, and quickly followed by the bridegroom, who had changed his riding boots and dusty travelling dress for a splendid suit of gold brocade. Federico was supported by the Duke of Milan and attended by as many of the nobles and courtiers as the little room could hold. As soon as the Marchesa saw him she held out her arms, and with tears in her eyes embraced him. "Your Excellency," wrote Isabella's correspondent, "may imagine how tenderly she kissed him." Then the bride entered, clad in white satin embroidered with silver, with a high collar and sleeves sown with pearls, a jewelled girdle round her waist, and a white satin cap studded with diamonds. The Bishop of

Vercelli spoke a few words, and the noise was so great that only those who stood near him could hear a word. "So my lord wedded her with great rejoicing, and when every one had done kissing the Lady Duchess's hand, we all went to supper. After this Madama herself left her bed to accompany the bridal pair to their rooms, and gave them her blessing with such loving words that all who heard her wept for gladness. God grant that they may both enjoy the happiness which we hope and desire for them, since the bride is beautiful, gracious, kind, wise, and virtuous, and I am quite certain that Your Excellency will be delighted with her. This morning the Magnifico Francesco Gonzaga took the bride my lord's gift of jewels . . . and to-day there is a *fiesta* in the Castello, and all the ladies of Casale are coming. As soon as he was dressed this morning, my lord went to see *Madama illustrissima*, and again after dinner and before supper, and they are all very gay. And I only regret," adds the secretary, "that I cannot better tell Your Excellency the things of which it is my duty to inform you."¹

Meanwhile Isabella once more administered the State in her son's absence, and superintended the final preparations for his bride's reception. Throughout the summer Giulio Romano and a host of builders, artists, and decorators had been working at the Castello, where the Duke had decided to take up his abode. A new suite of rooms, known as the Palazzina, was built for the use of the Duchess, to the right of the drawbridge leading to the Ponte S. Giorgio. These apartments were con-

¹ M. Sanuto, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

nected with Isabella's old rooms near the Camera degli Sposi by a corridor, and the roof was adorned with a terraced garden and open loggia overlooking the lake. On the 7th of October, Ippolito Calandra wrote to tell the Duke of a visit which his mother had paid to the new building, and of the great satisfaction which she had expressed. "Yesterday *Madama illustrissima* came to the Castello, and wished to see everything. She was much pleased, and went out on the new terrace, which delighted her as much as possible, and stayed there for more than an hour, expressing the greatest admiration for the magnificent view. 'If in my time,' she exclaimed, 'there had ever been such a fine terrace, I should never have complained of having had to live in the Castello!' Her Excellency visited the garden and loggia, which she praised greatly as a thing excellently contrived and admirably designed. She then wished to go down into the rooms, but had not courage to descend by the wooden steps, although a railing had been put up for protection, so Isabella and Madonna Paola went down with the maidens, and Isabella afterwards told Madama exactly how the rooms were arranged. All this pleased her exceedingly, and she said that Your Excellency could not have made a better or more convenient addition to the Castello." A few days afterwards, Ippolito wrote to tell the Duke that the Marchesa had visited the new rooms again, to arrange the hangings and furniture, and had inspected the rooms prepared for the Duchess's ladies, and the new court looking over the bridge. "Once more she expressed the greatest satisfaction, and laughed as she said to me: 'Ah! Ippolito, if in my

time I and my ladies had ever enjoyed such lodgings as these, we should indeed have thought ourselves fortunate !' ”¹

On receiving his mother's report, Federico wrote from Casale, saying that a covered passage must be made from the old Studio to the new rooms, as he objected to the wooden staircase, and further ordered a stone flight of steps to be constructed leading up to the terrace and hanging gardens on the roof. By Giulio Romano's advice, the walls of the new rooms were not painted, but only enamelled in white and adorned with pictures, while the doors and mantelpieces were hung with Spanish leather. “By this means,” wrote the master, “the rooms will be ready when Your Excellency arrives, and Her Highness the Duchess can enjoy them this winter, because they really look very well, and when the fine season comes they can be painted.”² Messer Giulio and Isabella devoted great pains to the choice of the pictures with which the new rooms were to be hung. On the 14th, Giulio wrote that the windows were all filled with glass and the paintings hung on the walls in fine gilded frames. A fortnight later, Ippolito Calandra sent his lord a list of the masterpieces which had been selected, with Madama's help, to adorn the new hall or Camera delle Arme, as it was called from the armorial bearings of Francesco and Isabella, and of Federico and his wife, which were painted on the walls.

“The pictures in this hall,” writes the chamberlain in a memorable passage,³ “are Messer Giulio's portrait

¹ S. Davari, *Arch. St. Lomb.*, 1895.

² Gaye, *Carteggio*, ii. 228.

³ Pungileoni, *Elogio di Raffaele*, p. 182 ; Luzio, *Arch. d. Arte*, i. 181.

of Your Excellency, that of Pope Leo by Raphael, which was given you by His Holiness Clement VII., the portrait of Your Excellency by Messer Tiziano, and the one which Raphael of Urbino painted in Rome of Your Excellency, as well as that picture, which was given you by a Venetian, of a Lady and her child, and was so much praised by Messer Giulio, and the splendid St. Jerome in oils that was painted in Flanders and bought by Your Excellency. All the pictures are in gilded frames and look very beautiful. In the Camerino of the Duchess we might perhaps have six pictures—Mantegna's *Cristo in Scurto*, Messer Tiziano's St. Jerome, M. Giulio's Santo Caterina, and the Leonardo da Vinci that was given you by Conte Nicola. These would make a fine show in the room."

These few lines have been frequently quoted, and throw considerable light on the famous pictures that were in the Gonzaga collection during Isabella's lifetime. The portrait of Pope Leo X. and his two Cardinals had, as we have already said, been presented to Federico Gonzaga by Pope Clement VII. in 1525, and was not the original by Raphael, but a copy by Andrea del Sarto.¹ The portrait of Federico in armour, by Titian, was the noble work which the Venetian master had painted in the spring of 1530, and which excited the admiration of Charles V. more than any other picture that he saw at Mantua. Unfortunately this portrait, which, in Vasari's words, "seemed the life itself,"² and which was valued at 150 ducats in the inventory of 1627, disappeared in the sack of Mantua, and was not among the works of art sold to Charles I.

¹ Vol. ii. 254.

² *Vite*, &c., v. 42.

Next to this masterpiece, Calandra mentions the precious little portrait of Federico as a boy, painted by Raphael in Rome, which, as we have already seen, had been recovered by Castiglione a few years before.¹ The St. Jerome by Titian was sent to the Duke from Venice in March 1531; while of the Leonardo given him by Count Nicola Maffei we have no certain knowledge, and can only suppose it to be the drawing of "a Woman's Head, with dishevelled hair" (*scapigliata*), which is the only work by this master's hand mentioned in the inventory of 1627. Lastly, in the portrait of the Lady and her child, by an unknown Venetian artist, which won Giulio Romano's praise, we may recognise a picture which has been sometimes supposed to represent Isabella d'Este herself and her son, chiefly because the lady wears the turban-shaped head-dress which the Marchesa had introduced, and which had become fashionable both in Milan and Venice. One example of this portrait is in the Gallery of the Hermitage. Another is in M. Ludwig Mond's collection in London, while other replicas are to be found in Italian galleries. The work is certainly of Venetian origin, but has no claim to represent the Marchesa, although the original hung for many years in the ducal palace at Mantua.

The preparations for the bride's entry were another subject which occupied both Isabella and Messer Giulio's thoughts. Federico had given orders that the decorations and festivities should be planned on a lavish scale, and a voluntary tax to defray these expenses was levied under the name of the Duke's wedding-gift. This, however, excited a good deal of grumbling among his loyal subjects, and Castig-

¹ Vol. ii. 161.

lione's mother, Luigia Gonzaga, was one of those who excused themselves from payment. Isabella, as usual, entered keenly into the discussion of every detail. "Madama," wrote Giulio Romano to the Duke, "is of opinion that a spacious covered bridge should be erected from the Ponte S. Giorgio to the Castello." He, on his part, proposed that a permanent flight of steps should be erected, leading from the shores of the lake, where the bride was to land, to a portico where Madama and her ladies would receive her. The walls of this portico might be painted white, and hung with festoons of verdure and blue draperies, with some embroideries, so as to look well for the day, without entailing any great expense, and a triumphal arch, as finely panelled and painted as those lately erected in honour of the Emperor's visit, might be raised on the side facing the Castello. "Here," he writes, "there would be plenty of room for Madama and all the gentle ladies of Mantua, and if it rains, or thunders and lightens, they would be under shelter, and there could be large and fine windows looking out on the lake, so that they might be able to see the arrival of the much-desired sails. Here all the chariots can be in waiting, and, immediately after the bride's reception, the ladies can drive without delay across the Piazza to the Duomo."¹

But before this plan could be carried out, a terrible inundation, such as had not been known for many years in Lombardy, suspended all festive preparations and created a general panic. A week of heavy rains set in at the close of October. The Po, which was unusually low for the time of year, suddenly rose several feet and flooded the whole country

¹ Gaye, *op. cit.*, ii. 233-242.

between Governolo and Mantua. The Mincio and the Oglio broke their bounds; Sacchetta and Borgoforte were submerged, and many villages and houses were destroyed. The injury to property was immense, and Mantua itself was in great peril for some days. "And still the rain continues," wrote Benedetto Agnello to the Doge of Venice, "and still bad news comes in from all sides. The upper course of all the rivers, we hear, is swollen, and not only have several towns been flooded, but many buildings have been destroyed, which makes me think that God in his anger has allowed this to happen for the chastisement of our sins." In this emergency Isabella showed her usual courage and presence of mind. She summoned the chief officials, appointed special commissioners, and gave the necessary orders for the repair of the dykes and the preservation of the city. "*Madama illustrissima*," wrote Agnello, "as Your Sublimity can imagine, has been in the greatest distress in the world, at the sight of the terrible calamity which has so suddenly befallen her state. More than all, she is grieved to hear of the damage which you and the gentlemen of Venice have suffered by the bursting of the dykes of the Po at Sacchetta, and has taken every possible precaution to prevent the extension of the mischief. An infinite number of men are working day and night to repair the dykes at this point, and if it is in mortal power to prevent further harm, Your Sublimity may be certain that it will be done. But God and Fate have willed this, and it is not in our hands to resist them."¹

By degrees the floods abated, and the damage

¹ M. Sanuto, *Diarii*, lv. 110, 111.

was as far as possible repaired. But the entry of the Duke and his bride was put off, and did not take place until the 16th of November. The Duchess had been seriously unwell, and the ceremony of her reception was considerably curtailed in consequence.¹ The Duke of Milan, who had been invited to assist at the festivities, remained at Vigevano, and Isabella alone, surrounded by her faithful subjects, welcomed Federico's bride to the splendid home where her coming had been long and anxiously expected.

¹ M. Sanuto, lvi. 158.

CHAPTER XLI

1531—1536

Isabella at Venice—Death of Margherita Cantelma—Marriage of Ferrante Gonzaga—Duchess Margherita Paleologa—Ariosto and Bernardo Tasso send the Marchesa their poems—Visit of the Emperor Charles V. to Mantua—Marriage and death of the Marquis of Monferrato—His State annexed to Mantua—Birth of a son to Duke Federico—Titian paints Isabella's portrait from the original by Francia.

THE marriage of her eldest son was the last occasion on which Isabella took any active part in public affairs. Her vigorous frame began to show signs of decay, and she became slowly conscious of advancing age. In August 1531, she made her will,¹ and in the following spring, besides taking her usual trip to Venice, visited the baths of Albano for the good of her health. On the 22nd of May, the Marchesa lost one of her oldest friends, Margherita, the widow of Sigismondo Cantelmo, Duke of Sora, who had spent the last years of her life at Mantua. This lady bequeathed a considerable fortune to Isabella, begging her to found a convent of canonesses for the help of poor ladies of rank, and to erect a monument in memory of Sigismondo and his sons in the church of S. Maria della Presentazione.² Both of Margherita's last wishes were faithfully carried out, and the imposing tomb of the Cantelmi, which

¹ Luzio e Renier, *Mantova*, p. 282.

² D'Arco, *Notizie d'Isabella*, p. 221.

was executed from Giulio Romano's designs in 1534, is still preserved in a chapel of S. Andrea. These two objects naturally absorbed the greater part of the fortune which Isabella inherited from her dead friend, and she was justly annoyed when her son Ferrante wrote to beg for an advance of money, on the strength of this large legacy. "If I did not see," she replied, "that you evidently share the popular fallacy that Signora Cantelma's bequest has greatly enriched me, I should be extremely surprised at your boldness in daring to ask me for 3000 ducats. You know that it has never been my habit to hoard money, although certainly, if report spoke true, I should have no difficulty in satisfying you!"¹ Ferrante had always been the most extravagant of Isabella's sons, and the most unscrupulous in his demands upon his mother's purse. But, he had lately married the wealthy heiress Isabella of Capua and had bought the principality of Guastalla, to the south of Mantua, from the Torelli family, so that Isabella felt justified in resisting his importunities on this occasion.

Both her sons' marriages, however, turned out happily, and Isabella became fondly attached to her daughter-in-law, Margherita Paleologa. This gentle and virtuous princess, without possessing any remarkable talents or making herself in any way conspicuous, soon won the love of her husband and subjects. In the first years of her married life the young Duchess suffered from the insolence and hatred of Isabella Boschetti, who still retained, in a measure, her hold upon Federico. But before long this old intrigue ended in a tragic manner. It was reported in Mantua

¹ Luzio in *Nuova Antologia*, 1896.

that the Duke's mother-in-law, the Marchesa Anna, indignant at the slights which her daughter received, had tried to poison Federico's mistress. Upon this, her husband, Francesco Gonzaga, entered into a conspiracy against the Duke, and was betrayed and put to death at Ferrara.¹

In the autumn of 1531, the Marchesa went back to Venice, and while she was staying there her old friend Ariosto sent her a copy of the third edition of his *Orlando Furioso*. When her son Ferrante was born, in 1507, the poet had read her some cantos from his unpublished poem, and when the epic was first printed, in 1516, he came to Mantua in person and offered her the first copy. Now he gave her this new edition, containing the famous passage in honour of the house of Este, and the following lines in her praise :—

“ D'opere illustre e di bei studi amica
Ch'io non so ben se più leggiadra e bella,
Mi debba dire, o più saggia e pudica,
Liberale e magnanima Isabella.

Per l'avvenir vo che ciascuna ch'aggia,
Il nome tuo, sia di sublime ingegno
E sia bella, gentil, cortese e saggia,
E di vera onestade arrivi al segno ;
Onde materia agli scrittori caggia
Di celebrare il nome inclito e degno,
Talchè Parnaso, Pindo et Elicone,
Sempre Isabella, Isabella risuona.”²

The Marchesa replied on the 15th of October in the following cordial terms: “Your book of *Orlando Furioso*, which you have sent me, is most welcome in all respects, and most of all, since, as you

¹ G. B. Intra in *Arch. St. Lomb.*, 1887.

² Cantos xlii., xliii. 59 and xxix. 26.

tell me, you have newly revised and enlarged it. I shall no doubt find new pleasure and delight in reading the poem. I thank you, more than I can express, for your kind allusions to me, and you may be quite sure that I shall always be ready to serve you, whenever an occasion presents itself, because of the great affection and admiration which I have always felt for your rare talents, which are indeed deserving of the highest favour. So, from my heart, I place myself wholly at your disposal.”¹

Isabella was as good as her word, and when, a fortnight later, Charles V. again visited Mantua, Ariosto was invited to meet him, and presented His Cæsarean Majesty with a copy of his *Orlando*. Seven months later, the great poet died, on the 6th of July 1533, and Girolamo da Sestola informed the Marchesa of his death. “Yesterday, at seven o’clock in the evening, our Messer Lodovico Ariosto died. He is certainly a very great loss. May God receive him!”² Isabella replied a week later in a warm letter, full of regret and affection. “All Ferrara,” she writes, “must weep for him, since we have lost in him not only a gentleman who was full of goodness, but one whose rare and excellent talents made him the greatest ornament of our country.”

Another old friend, Bernardo Tasso, the author of the *Amadigi*, sent Isabella a copy of his poems, entitled *Il Libro degli Amori*, on the 5th of December 1531, with the following graceful epistle: “I should care little for the small praise or blame these verses may bring me, were they not submitted to the judgment of Your Excellency, which is perfect in

¹ D’Arco, *op. cit.*, p. 324.

² Luzio in *Giorn. St. d. Lett.*, 1900.

these matters, as in many other honourable things. If they are fortunate enough to deserve your praise, they will be far more dear and precious to me than they now are. I beg Your Excellency to accept them, and, when you have a spare hour, take them up in your hand, and, as you read my poor verses, gently excuse my follies, remembering that from childhood I have been Your Excellency's servant, and shall ever remain so, as my actions will bear witness, if a little more time on earth is allowed me. And so I commend myself humbly to Your Excellency, praying that you may enjoy a long and happy life."¹

Isabella, who had become intimate with Tasso on her frequent visits to Ferrara, greatly appreciated this attentions, as the following letter shows:—

“Dearest Friend,—I have received and already read the greater part of your love-songs in the vulgar tongue, which you kindly sent me, and I think them so well chosen and gracefully expressed that their elegance not only demands my praise, but compels me to thank you for the pleasure and delight which your noble present has afforded me. I send you infinite thanks, and repeat that nothing could have given me more pleasure or filled me with greater desire to help you. I only await an occasion of showing you how warm is the love I bear you, and place myself at your disposal with my whole heart.”

Bernardo was afterwards appointed Governor of Ostiglia by Isabella's grandson, Duke Guglielmo, in 1563, and died at Mantua six years later in the arms of his greater son, Torquato Tasso.²

In November 1532, Charles V. once more crossed

¹ D'Arco, *op. cit.*, p. 323.

² Luzio, *op. cit.*

the Alps, and entered Mantua on the 7th, bringing with him a great train of Burgundian guards, baggage, horses, and sporting dogs. His pleasant and affable manners made a great impression on the Venetian envoys. He went out hunting or rode out every day *incognito* with the Duke, and walked about the town, unattended by his guards and frequently unrecognised. Often people were puzzled how to distinguish him from Alfonso d'Avalos, who was generally at his side and wore the same Spanish suit of black velvet embroidered with gold, until Charles, hearing them ask, "Which is he?" would raise his cap with a smile. Ferrante and his cousin, Luigi Gonzaga of Borgoforte, were the Emperor's constant companions, and talked and laughed with him in the most familiar way; but the Venetians noticed that he always spoke of war and politics with the Duke of Urbino, and only discussed hunting and other amusements with Federico. This time the Duke resolved to give a series of theatrical performances in the Castello, and asked his mother to allow her suite of rooms on the ground floor of the Corte Vecchia to be fitted up as a stage.¹ The preparations were on a grand scale, and cost Messer Giulio and Calandra no small amount of trouble. At Federico's request, Titian sent him a skilful and "very pleasing artist," called Vincenzo of Brescia, who painted a large canvas with villages and houses and an Emperor on horseback attended by guards on Arab steeds, which was suspended from the roof by gold silk cords.² Messer Giulio, "although little versed in such matters, also displayed rare skill and ingenuity,"

¹ M. Sanuto, *Diarii*, lvii. 227, &c.

² D'Ancona, *Teatro*, ii. 430, &c

and painted, we are told, the most beautiful perspectives and scenery. "Never," exclaims Vasari, "were masquerades so splendid, or costumes so varied as those which this master designed for the jousts, pageants, and tournaments that were held on this occasion, and which the Emperor Charles and all present beheld with amazement."¹

The magnificent paintings in the new halls of the Castello, and above all Titian's portrait of the Duke, made a still deeper impression upon the art-loving monarch, who repeatedly declared that he should like this master to paint his own portrait.² Upon which Federico sent an express messenger to Venice, begging Titian to come to Mantua at once, and with a touch of his mother's practical nature, added a postscript desiring the painter to bring some fresh supplies of fish with him. Titian, however, was unable to leave Venice, and agreed to join the Emperor at Bologna, where he was to meet the Pope in December. On St. Andrew's Day, a solemn mass was held in S. Andrea, at which the Dukes of Ferrara, Urbino, Milan, and Mantua were all present, and the Marchese del Vasto was invested with the Order of the Golden Fleece. On the 5th, a ball was held in the Castello, and the Marchesa Isabella sat at the Emperor's table, her daughter-in-law being in delicate health and unable to appear. When they had finished supper, Charles took his hostess by the hand and led her to the tables where the other guests sat, and himself waited on them in the most gallant fashion in the world. A final hunting party had been fixed to take place at Gonzaga, but was

¹ *Vile, &c.*, v. 335.

² P. Aretino, *Lettere*, i. 257.

stopped by a heavy fall of snow, and the Duke ordered sleighs to be prepared after the German fashion. But news came of the Pope's arrival at Bologna, and Charles could not tarry any longer. "All the ladies," says the Venetian, "were looking forward to this new amusement with delight, and cursed the Pope for disturbing their pleasures."¹ Towards the middle of the month, Charles started on his journey, escorted by the Dukes of Mantua, Ferrara, and Milan, and proceeded to Bologna, stopping on the way at Borgoforte Gonzaga, and Correggio, where he was the guest of Veronica Gambara.

Before leaving Italy, the Emperor arranged a marriage between Donna Giulia of Aragon, the Duke of Mantua's rejected bride, and Giovanni Giorgio, the infirm old Marquis of Monferrato. The marriage was celebrated with great pomp at Ferrara in April, and on the 21st, the bride entered Casale in state. But the poor old bridegroom was so ill that he could not leave his room, and died eight days afterwards. The Infanta returned to her mother at Ferrara, and the male line of the Paleologhi came to an end. The Duke of Mantua now claimed Monferrato by right of his wife, the only surviving child of the Marquis Guglielmo, and in spite of the opposition of the Marquis of Saluzzo and of the Duke of Savoy, finally attained his object. In 1536, an imperial decree was issued by which Federico and his heirs obtained the title of Marquis of Monferrato, and this rich province was annexed to Mantua.

On the 13th of March 1533, Duchess Margherita gave birth to a son and heir, who received the name of Francesco and was held at the font by his grand-

¹ M. Sanuto, *op. cit.*, p. 334.

mother, Isabella d'Este. The long-desired event was celebrated by public rejoicings which lasted three days, and the riotous youth of Mantua gave vent to their exultation by making a huge bonfire, in which the doors of the shops, the seats of the Palazzo di Giustizia, with the documents which they contained, and even the chairs of the Duomo, were all consumed.¹

In this same month of March 1533, Isabella addressed a letter to a certain Messer Giovanni Tucca, who was secretary to Alfonso d'Avalos, Marchese del Vasto. This powerful favourite had twice visited Mantua with his imperial master, and had formed a close friendship with the Duke, who employed Titian to paint the well-known group of D'Avalos and his family. This fine work was long one of the ornaments of the ducal collection, and after the sale of Charles the First's pictures, passed into the hands of Louis XIV. It now came to the Marchesa's knowledge that Del Vasto had expressed a wish to acquire her own picture of the Magdalen for his aunt, Vittoria Colonna. In her anxiety to oblige her son's influential friend, Isabella promptly sent the picture in question, with the following note, to Messer Tucca:—

“Some time ago, I saw a letter which you wrote to my friend, Count Nicola Maffei, in which you mentioned that the illustrious Signor Marchese del Vasto wished to have my picture of S. M. Magdalen, that he might give it to the Signora Marchesa di Pescara. Since there is nothing in the world that I would not give His Excellency, I felt the greatest satisfaction on hearing of this his desire,

¹ M. Sanuto, *op. cit.*

and would have sent him the picture at once ; but as I wished to keep a replica of the work, it was necessary to wait until the painter was able to copy it. Now it is finished, and I send the picture to you by the bearer, praying you to present it to the Signor Marchese in my name, saying how much I wish it were even better than it is, although if it pleases the Lady Marchesa, it cannot fail to be very beautiful. And pray assure him—what, indeed, he knows already—that anything else which I possess is at his service.”¹

In parting with her choicest pictures to gratify the Emperor's favourites, Isabella was only following the example of her brother Alfonso, who allowed the Imperial secretary, Covos, to choose several of the finest Titians at Ferrara, including his own portrait and that of his son Ercole. But it would be interesting to know who was the painter of the Magdalen which passed into the hands of Vittoria Colonna. This accomplished lady had already, as we know, one Magdalen of surpassing beauty, painted by Titian at the Duke of Mantua's request, and it is doubtful if she wished for another. On the other hand, a copy of a Magdalen by Titian is mentioned in the inventory of 1627, and the relations of this master with the Gonzagas were so frequent that Vittoria's picture was probably his work, and may have been copied from the small travelling-piece which he painted for the Marchesa in 1530.

There is no doubt that Titian executed another commission for Isabella about this time. This was the fine portrait of herself now in the Imperial Gallery at Vienna. This picture, which represents the Mar-

¹ Luzio in *Rivista Mantovana*, i. 19.

chesa in the full bloom of her beauty, although it was painted in 1536, when she was already over sixty, has always been a puzzle to critics and historians. But new documents from the Archivio Gonzaga have been recently brought to light by Dr. Luzio, which explain the enigma, and make the whole case clear.¹ Titian had already, as we have seen, painted a portrait of Isabella at the age of fifty-five, when her face and figure had lost their youthful grace, and the Duke, who was fondly attached to his mother, naturally wished to have a picture of the Marchesa as she appeared in the flower of her age, by the hand of his favourite master. Then Isabella remembered the portrait by Francia which had excited so much admiration when it was painted in 1511, and which, to her great regret, she had given to Gianfrancesco Zaninello. At her request, the brother of the Ferrarese collector, into whose hands Francia's portrait had passed after Gianfrancesco's death, lent Titian the precious picture, which the great master promised to copy as soon as possible. The negotiation was effected by means of one of Isabella's constant correspondents at Ferrara, the humanist Stabellino, who generally signs himself "Apollo" or "Demogorgon" in his letters. On the 3rd of March 1534, this writer addressed the following letter to her from the Schifanoia palace, where he was staying with Duchess Renée, begging for the return of the portrait:—

"Dear and most honoured Lady,—About three or four months ago, Your Excellency desired that I should ask Zaninello, the brother of the late Giovanni Francesco Zaninello, for your portrait, in

¹ Luzio in *Emporium*, 1900, p. 432.

order that I might send it to you at Mantua, with the promise that it should be returned to him in about a month's time. I asked him for the picture, and he gave it me gladly, and I sent it to Your Highness. But the portrait has never been returned. Zaninello has asked me several times about this, and has begged me earnestly to write and ask you to send his picture back, if you have no objection, since he wishes to keep it for your sake, and in remembrance of the devoted attachment which he has long borne and still bears you.—Your servant, APOLLO.”

On receiving this note, Isabella wrote off at once to Benedetto Agnello:—

“Since the lender of our portrait which Messer Titian had to copy begs earnestly that it may be returned, we desire you to recover the picture, and send it to us by a discreet and trusty person, packed in such a manner that it may not run any risk of being injured.” Mantua, March 6, 1534.

But Titian, it is plain, had not yet begun the portrait which he was to paint from Francia's original, and two whole years passed before the work was finished. On the 5th of May 1536, when the Emperor was in Italy again, and the Duke of Mantua went to meet him at Asti, Isabella once more renewed her oft-repeated entreaty, and begged Agnello to ask Titian to return the borrowed portrait. The ambassador wrote in reply from Venice: “Titian is not here; he started for Mantua some days ago, and followed the Duke to court, intending to return with him to Mantua, where Your Excellency will see him before I do, and can speak to him yourself about Zaninello's portrait, and order him to return it as soon as he reaches home.”

On the 29th of May, Isabella wrote to acknowledge the receipt of Titian's portrait, which had at length reached her:—

“Our portrait by the hand of Titian pleases us so much that we doubt if we were ever as beautiful as this, even at the age at which he has represented us. We have been thinking of making some return to Titian for the trouble which he has had, but have decided to wait until he sends back Zaninello's portrait, which you will beg him to restore, in order that it may be given back to those gentlemen who have been expecting it so impatiently, and, it must be owned, with good reason.”¹

This second portrait of Isabella by Titian was also copied by Peter Paul Rubens when he was at Mantua in the early years of the seventeenth century, and his replica was engraved by Vorsterman, whose print bears the inscription: *Isabella Estensis, Francisci Gonzagæ, March. Mantovæ, uxor. E. Titiani prototypo. P. P. Rubens ex.* The engraving agrees exactly with the portrait by Titian, which came to Vienna in the Archduke Leopold's collection, and there can be no doubt that this handsome and richly-dressed young princess is Isabella d'Este, as she was when Francia painted her twenty-five years before. The features bear a marked likeness to those of her daughter Leonora; the blue eyes remind us that Isabella had found fault with the Bologna master for not making her eyes dark enough, and the wavy hair retains the golden hue which Equicola and Trissino compare to the radiant locks of Petrarch's Laura. On her head we see the favourite jewelled cap, while the old pattern of interlaced links, de-

¹ Luzio, *Emporium*, 1900, p. 432.

signed for her by Niccolo da Correggio and Leonardo long ago, is repeated in the gold and silver embroidery of the pale blue sleeves. A black velvet *camora* or pelisse, trimmed with ermine, is thrown over her shoulders; a white muslin chemisette and frills set off the dazzling fairness of her skin, and pearl earrings and a pearl brooch in her head-dress are her only ornaments. This portrait, admirably painted as it is, naturally lacks the life and character of Leonardo's drawing, and is without the force that distinguishes Rubens's copy of the earlier Titian. We feel that the beautiful Marchesa herself never sat for this picture, and that first Francia, and after him Titian, worked from another artist's design. We admire the grace and elegance of Isabella's attire, and are able to form some idea of her features, but we miss the keen intelligence and sparkling vivacity that were the most striking marks of her vivid and brilliant personality.

CHAPTER XLII

1531—1537

Relations of Isabella with Ferrara—Stabellino's letters—Duchess Renée and her child Anna d'Este—Death of Duke Alfonso—Isabella's trip to the Lake of Garda—Her favourite dwarfs—The government of Solarolo—Leonora of Urbino—Her son Guidobaldo's marriage—Manufacture of embroidered stuffs and caps at Mantua—Isabella's majolica dinner services—Plates in the Museo Correr and British Museum—Cardinal Gonzaga sends his mother a medal of Aristotle—Her interest in gardening—The gardens at Porto—Trissino begs the help of her gardener at his villa of Cricoli.

THE strong family affection which was so striking a feature in Isabella's character became deepened and intensified in her declining years. Nothing is more remarkable than the warmth and constancy with which she clung to her old home and friends at Ferrara, in these last days. She still paid frequent visits to her brother's court, and received weekly letters from Girolamo da Sestola, while the witty novelist Stabellino kept her fully informed of everything that happened at Ferrara. Now that Duke Alfonso had at length recovered Modena and Reggio, a new era of peace and prosperity set in, and the court resumed its old gaiety. Stabellino's letters abound in descriptions of the fêtes that were held at the Schifanoia, and of the costumes worn by Duchess Renée and her ladies. Isabella, as usual, was anxious to hear every detail, and the novelist

did his best to satisfy her curiosity. He tells her how one evening the Duchess entertained the ladies of the court at the Schifanoia, and appeared in a blue satin robe with a high collar in the French fashion, but with sleeves slashed to "show the white chemisette, such as our ladies wear," a gold fillet, little black velvet cap with a white feather on her head. Six of her ladies wore black satin, and six were robed in crimson, with the same velvet caps and gold fillets, while the Queen of Naples's daughters were clad in Italian fashion with low-cut bodices and bare necks. A week afterwards Renée appeared in the park at Belfiore, wearing a black satin robe in the French style, but a gold cap of Mantuan cut, which, not being a French fashion, greatly exercised the tongues of her guests, although Stabellino remarks: "It is said she wore this cap to hide her ears, or perhaps from fear of cold."¹ A few months later he reports that Madame de Soubise has, it is plain, persuaded the Duchess to give up the Portuguese fashion then in vogue in Italy, and return to the French style of dress. "All our ladies," he adds, "are on the tip-toe of expectation to see what fashions she adopts, and are ready to follow her." Unfortunately the influence of Madame de Soubise extended to other matters besides dress, and became the cause of serious troubles, which ended in her disgrace and return to France. But, as long as Duke Alfonso lived, Renée remained comparatively tranquil, and in November 1533, the birth of a son, who received his grandfather's name, and had Pope Clement VII. for his sponsor, was the cause of great rejoicings. Two years before this, the Duchess had given birth

¹ Fontana, *op. cit.*, i. 144.

to a daughter, who was christened Anna, after her grandmother, Anne de Bretagne, and was said to bear a striking resemblance to her great-aunt, Isabella.

On the 24th of January 1532, that kindly old gossip, Sestola, wrote to Isabella: "As our Lady Duchess rode to-day in her litter, to see the tournament at the Schifanoia, she called me to walk by her side, and asked me what I thought of her baby, who is indeed a beautiful child. She told me that our Signor had said that she was a little like Your Excellency when you were a child. I replied that I thought so too, and that I had seen a portrait of Your Signoria at Mantua which certainly resembled the little girl. The Duchess immediately told me to write to Your Excellency, and beg you to send her this portrait, which is one that I saw in the house of *la Brogna*, when we went to see her babe christened. The portrait is one of Your Highness as a child, if I remember right, wearing a garland or wreath on your brow, with a clasp in the centre of the forehead. I think that you must have given the picture to Brogna, because you showed it to me when we were at her house. Will Your Excellency kindly ask Brogna for the portrait, and let me have it? and when the Duchess has seen it, I promise to send it back safely. The Duchess never lets the baby go out of her sight, and she is certainly a very fine child."¹

Isabella sent the portrait by the next courier to Ferrara, with the following note: "I send my portrait to gratify the Duchess, and think this must be the one you mean, because it was taken when I was about three years old. You will be able to judge if it bears any resemblance to Her Excellency's

¹ Luzio in *Emporium*, 1900, p. 345.

little daughter, and if, please God, she is at all like me in the Duke's opinion, I shall be greatly delighted. I have given another portrait, which was taken after my marriage, to the court painter here, to be restored, and will send it to you as soon as this is done, but should be glad to have both of them back again. Commend me to the Duchess."

On the 8th of February, Girolamo wrote to say that both the portraits had reached him safely. "I took them at once to the Duchess, who was more delighted with them than I can say, and we went to look at the child directly. Certainly, my dear lady, the portrait of you is very like her—from the nose downwards, her face is exactly your own. Every one who has seen your portrait says that it bears the strongest resemblance to the child, and so Her Excellency has begged to be allowed to keep it for this carnival."¹

Before the portraits were returned, the Duke ordered them both to be copied, so that some likeness of the Marchesa should remain at Ferrara, and that he should keep these recollections of his sister before his eyes. Isabella was highly gratified, and took especial interest in this little Anna d'Este, who was, one day, to become the wife of Duke Francis of Guise, and hand down the yellow locks of Lucrezia Borgia and the charm of the Este princesses to the heirs of the house of Lorraine.

In May 1534, Alfonso d'Este went to Milan for the wedding of his nephew Francesco Sforza. It may have been at his suggestion that his favourite master Titian painted the portraits of the bridegroom and of his youthful bride, the Emperor's niece, Christina of

¹ Luzio, *op. cit.*

Denmark. In the following autumn, Duke Alfonso died very suddenly, on the 31st of October 1534, only three months after his enemy, Pope Clement VII. But the loss of this brother, to whom Isabella had been so tenderly attached from her earliest childhood, made no difference in the ties which bound her to Ferrara. The Marchesa's relations with his children remained as intimate as before, and when in the winter of 1536 Renée was ill, and suffering after the birth of her second daughter Lucrezia, Duke Ercole wrote to his aunt, begging her to spend carnival at Ferrara, and amuse his sick wife. Isabella gladly responded to his appeal, and on the 30th of January, wrote to tell her son Duke Federico of her safe arrival at Ferrara. "To-day I arrived here half-an-hour after nightfall, and was received by the Archbishop [her nephew Ippolito] four miles from Ferrara, and found the Duke and many nobles and ladies awaiting me on the banks of the river. They escorted me with lighted torches to my lodgings in the Corte Vecchia of the Castello, opposite the Church of San Domenico. Soon afterwards I visited the Duchess, who has had a touch of fever, but nothing very serious, and then went into the hall to see the dancing begin." A few days later she wrote again, and spoke of enjoying the company of the Duke and Duchess, and of a supper given by Ercole in the new rooms of the palace, "which was followed by a concert of varied and excellent music, and afterwards by dancing till bed-time."¹

Isabella, it is evident, had lost none of her powers of enjoyment with advancing age, and the high spirits and keen interest with which she entered into

¹ Fontana, *op. cit.*

the amusements of the younger generation, made her presence welcome. Her love of travel was still as great as ever. In the spring of 1535, she took another expedition, accompanied by her favourite ladies and courtiers, to the shores of the Lago di Garda,¹ and once more visited Sermione and Salò, and all the lovely Riviera where she and Elisabetta of Urbino had spent that happy spring-time long ago. On this occasion her pet dwarf, Morgantino, was one of the party, and his tricks and pleasantries delighted the people who lived on the shores of the lake. Sometimes the peasants crowned him with flowers and leaves, and he danced *morescas* on the shores of the lake, or joined in the dances of the country folk, to their great delight. One day as he drove from Cavriana on the box of the Marchesa's coach, a violent storm of rain came on, and if Morgantino had not promptly taken refuge inside the carriage he must have been drowned, remarked one of the party, "like a fine chicken!"

This Morgantino was a very favourite dwarf, who accompanied the Marchesa to Rome in 1527, and charmed Cardinal Pisani so much at Venice in 1530, that Isabella allowed this reverend prelate to keep him for several weeks. He and Delia may have been the Nanino and Nanina to whom we find frequent allusions in the Marchesa's letters at this period of her life, and who became the parents of a race of pet dwarfs. Nanina was sent to Bologna when Isabella was there for the Emperor's coronation, and two years afterwards, the Marchesa offered Duchess Renée one of her children, who bade fair to be as small as herself. "Four years ago," she

¹ D'Ancona, *Teatro*, ii. ; Ferrato, *Del Viaggio*, &c., p. 43.

wrote to one of Renée's ladies, "I promised Madame Renée to give her the first girl who was born to my dwarfs. As she knows, the *puttina* is now two years old, and will no doubt remain a dwarf, although she hardly gives hopes of being as tiny as my Delia. She is now able to walk alone and without a guide, if the Duchess wishes to have her." Another "*bella Nanina*" was sent by the Marchesa to Ferrante Gonzaga's wife in October 1533, and the young princess wrote a grateful letter to her mother-in-law, saying that the dwarf was the sweetest and gentlest creature in the world, and afforded her infinite amusement."¹

In these last years Isabella's travels were chiefly limited to Ferrara and Venice, and only occasionally extended to her little fief of Solarolo. The frequent letters which she addressed to the governor and magistrates of this favoured town are still preserved in the Archivio Gonzaga,² and are said to be models of wise and far-sighted administration. While she did not shrink from repressing riot and disorder sternly, she insisted on the most scrupulous regard for justice, and neglected nothing which could promote the welfare of her subjects. After Isabella's death the little principality passed to her younger grandson, Luigi Gonzaga, who inherited the Duchy of Nevers through his wife, and sold Solarolo in 1574 to Pope Gregory XIII.³

Isabella's affection for her daughter Leonora had never been as great and absorbing as that which she cherished for her sons, and after the death of the

¹ Luzio e Renier in *Nuova Antologia*, 1891, p. 134.

² Luzio in *Arch. St. Lomb.*, 1901, p. 146.

³ Litta, *Famiglie*, vol. iii. tav. 35.

Duchess Elisabetta, misunderstandings often arose between Federico Gonzaga and his brother-in-law, which made a division between the two families. But in her last years Isabella became more closely drawn towards Leonora, and her heart yearned over this daughter who had left home so young, and had known so much trouble. After her return from Rome in 1527, when Leonora was taking the baths of Albano, Isabella spoke very affectionately of her to a Dominican friar, who reported the conversation to the Duchess. "The other day," he wrote, "Madama, your Illustrious Mother and my honoured mistress, spoke of Your Excellency and of all the miseries and ill-health which you have endured, and expressed the greatest distress and anxiety on your account. Twice over Her Excellency repeated these words: 'The poor child has really been cruelly tormented by fortune! She has really never had any happiness; I only wonder she has not died of grief!' And she repeated these words, as if she herself shared your sufferings, so that I can tell Your Excellency I felt quite consoled, and could see that she spoke from the bottom of her heart. I have always known her kind and loving to Your Excellency, but now I see how much deep affection and sympathy she feels for you. . . . So Your Excellency must take courage, and together with the benefit which you derive from the waters and your prayers, this good news may help to give you long and happy days."¹

In 1533, Leonora spent the spring months at Mantua, and gave birth to a son named Giulio, who entered the Church, and afterwards became a

¹ Luzio e Renier, *Mantova*, p. 281.

Cardinal. In the following year her eldest son, Guidobaldo, the boy who had received his first lessons in Virgil at his grandmother's knee, was married to Giulia Varana, the heiress of Camerino. Isabella had always been on friendly terms with this family, and kept up an active correspondence with the Duchess of Camerino, who was related to the house of Este. The bride's trousseau, on this occasion, was chiefly made at Mantua, under the personal supervision of the Marchesa, who wrote to tell the Duchess that the embroideries were all in hand, and should be finished as soon as possible. "I quite hope," she adds, "that they may be as beautiful and perfect as I should wish, since, as Your Highness knows, there are, in this city, persons of great skill and knowledge in this branch of art."¹ Thus, even in her old age, Isabella maintained her reputation for elegance and fine taste, and foreign queens and princesses still looked to her as the glass of fashion. The French Queen warmly appreciated a gift of a dozen pairs of gloves which Isabella sent her one Christmas, and the gold-embroidered caps or *scuffiotti* which were made from her patterns at Mantua, became famous throughout Italy. When Lucrezia Borgia first married she begged for one of these caps, and when in later years Duke Alfonso was growing bald, Bartolomeo Ziliolo asked Isabella to send him some very beautiful caps, elegantly worked in gold and silver, which he had seen at Mantua, and received five of the best specimens which the Marchesa could lay hands on, by express.² Again, in 1518, we find Raphael and Castiglione's friend the historian, Andrea

¹ Luzio in *Nuova Antologia*, 1896.

² Bertolotti, *Artisti*, &c.

Navagero, thanking Equicola for the gold *scuffiotto* which he has sent his *innamorata*, and which this fair lady wears with all the more pleasure because it is made after a new fashion which has not yet been seen in Venice. In those days when the Court of the Gonzagas had gained a world-wide celebrity, a band of Mantuan embroiderers emigrated to London, and settled at the Court of Henry VIII., where they found speedy employment.

The word "Mantua-maker" is said to owe its origin to these Italian emigrants, and it was the fame of Isabella d'Este that inspired Leigh Hunt's well-known lines :

" Mantua of every age the long renown,
That now a Virgil giv'st, and now a gown !"

Another artistic manufacture which Isabella patronised throughout her life, and on which she left her mark, was the majolica of Urbino. Many commissions for this beautiful ware were given by her to the workers of Casteldurante and Pesaro. In 1523, Alfonso d'Este sent an artist named Antonio da Faenza, who was working for him at Ferrara, to his sister at Mantua, with several fine dishes and plates of his manufacture. "If you wish for similar works of equal beauty," wrote the Duke, "you have only to give your orders to Maestro Antonio, who will not fail to satisfy you."¹ And in 1530, when Calandra wrote to order a dinner service, or *credenza*, Picenardi, the poet who frequently corresponded with the Marchesa, replied: "I have been to Urbino, where I saw many admirable pieces of majolica, painted with landscapes,

¹ Bertolotti in *Arch. St. Lomb.*, xvi. 832.

fables, and stories of surpassing beauty. I inquired about the service which you ordered. It is impossible to give any idea of the price without knowing the quality and quantity of the pieces required. But they tell me that one of the large dishes would be about two and a half ducats, and the smaller ones a ducat, or a ducat and a half each. Bowls and round dishes are three or four ducats a-piece, according to the style of workmanship, which varies considerably in excellence.”¹

Many pieces of the magnificent dinner services which once belonged to Isabella are still in existence, and may be seen in public and private collections. There are seventeen plates in the Correr Museum at Venice, bearing the Este and Gonzaga arms, and painted with graceful mythological figures—Apollo playing the viol, and Orpheus charming the wild beasts with his magic song—in which Morelli recognised the hand of Raphael’s master, Timoteo Viti. Another plate, painted with Isabella’s favourite device of musical notes and rests, may be seen in the Bologna Museum; while several richly-coloured dishes are in the British Museum. The last-named pieces all bear the Este and Gonzaga arms, supported by winged boys, and the motto *Nec spe nec metu*. Two of the largest dishes are decorated with groups of Apollo slaying the Python, and Daphne turning into the laurel bush as the Sun-god lays his hand upon her.² But the finest of all is the *scodella* or bowl in M. Alphonse de Rothschild’s collection in Paris, which M. Jacquemart has called the masterpiece of Italian

¹ Campori, *Notizie*, &c., p. 111.

² Lermolieff, *Gallerie zu Berlin*, p. 219, &c.

majolica.¹ Here the ground is blue, and the Marchesa's arms, including the fleur-de-lys which the Este were privileged to wear, are blazoned in colours on a shield, supported by *putti*, while below a troop of winged boys are represented, with banners in their hands, and a scroll inscribed with the words, *Nec spe nec metu*. Both for elegance of shape and quality of paste, as well as for the grace of the painted figures and charm of the whole decoration, this centre-piece, which once adorned Isabella's dinner-table, remains unsurpassed. All of these exquisite specimens are now recognised to be the work of Nicolo Pellipario of Casteldurante, who lived at Urbino between 1520 and 1530, and many of them still bear the monogram of this fine artist, whose rare merit our Marchesa was quick to discover and turn to good account.

But fond as Isabella was of fine majolica and rich stuffs, of elegant costumes and delicate embroideries, the love of antiques remained her ruling passion. Of all her contemporaries none was more fully dominated by that "foolish madness," to which Zuan Francesco Valier referred, when he sent her an antique marble head which had just arrived from Rhodes, and was greatly admired in Venice, although he fears it may seem a vile thing among the treasures of the Grotta. Isabella thanked her Venetian friend in rapturous terms, which made him say that if the head had been made of diamonds and rubies, she could not have expressed more gratitude.

Her delight was still greater when, in August, 1536, Cardinal Ercole, the one of her sons who inherited the most of his mother's scholarly tastes,

¹ *Gazette d. B. Arts*, xix. 397.

sent her a cast of a portrait-medal of Aristotle which had lately been discovered in Rome. Pomponazzi's old pupil appreciated the worth of this rare treasure to the full, and felt sure that his mother would understand the deep interest which he felt in contemplating the features of the great philosopher.

“Most illustrious Lady, and dearest Mother,— Since a very ancient medal bearing the head of Aristotle has lately been found here, a number of casts and impressions have been taken from it. After a great deal of trouble I have at length succeeded in obtaining one of these, which I now send to Your Excellency, so that as it is impossible to obtain the medal itself, which is no longer here, you may at least have a cast that shows the face of this divine man. And certainly, if ever the reverse of a medal was suitable and appropriate, it is this figure of the Goddess of Nature, concerning whom Aristotle reasoned so well that he seemed to penetrate to the very marrow of her bones. I shall be pleased if this cast satisfies Your Excellency, whose hands I kiss humbly, knowing that the sight of my hand-writing will show you that I am in good health, in spite of the excessive heat.”¹ From Rome, August 17, 1536.

To the last this wonderful woman retained that overmastering love of beauty, alike in art or nature, which had distinguished her from early youth. The spring loveliness of the shores of Garda and the blue waters of that sunny lake still excited her enthusiasm as keenly as of old, and she was never tired of improving and adorning the gardens of Porto. In these last years of her life she spent much time in

¹ Bertolotti, *Artisti*, &c.

this favourite retreat, which was so closely connected with her happiest days. Here was the Casino which Biagio Rossetti, the Ferrarese architect, had reared on the pattern of the summer-house in her mother's garden, and the Boschetto which she had planted in the year her father died. Here was the sumptuous marble fountain, with its reliefs and statues, designed by the Lombard sculptor who had wrought Beatrice's tomb, and the loggia where Castiglione loved to linger on summer evenings, and the green lawns and quiet places which soothed the sorrows of the good Dominican scholar who was torn away from his beloved books. Here, too, was the shady grove of plane trees on the banks of the rushing stream, where Bandello loved to sit on the fine short grass telling his stories to princes and humanists, while Isabella and her ladies rested in the hot noontide. Here were the sylvan arbours and Arcadian haunts sung by Niccolo Liburnio, the parish priest of S. Fosca in Venice, who dedicated his pastoral poems to the Marchesa. "I sing the praises of the delicious gardens of Porto, green with perpetual verdure, musical with the voice of waters, glowing with luscious fruits and sweetest flowers."¹ They were dead and gone, those brilliant guests whose gay voices once woke the echoes of the rocks and filled the woodland glades with music and laughter. But the flowers which the Venetian poet had sung, the rare plants and choice exotics which Isabella had collected with so much pains and expense, were still the pride of the gardens. The grass was still as green and the sound of the running waters fell as pleasantly on the ear, as in the days when Elisabetta Gonzaga

¹ N. Liburnio, *Le Selvette*.

and Emilia Pia walked hand-in-hand together under the trees.

The Marchesa herself took great interest in the practical side of gardening, and was careful to see that the fruit-trees were pruned and the box and yew hedges clipped at the proper season. She often sent her gardener to see the finest gardens in Venice, and occasionally allowed him, as a great favour, to give advice to her friends. In April, 1537, the old humanist, Trissino, wrote to tell Isabella of the neglected state in which he found his garden at Cricoli—"A villa," he explained, "no farther from Vicenza than Porto is from Mantua"—and begged that her gardener might be allowed to come there for two or three days and teach him how to trim his box-trees and give him advice "as to many other things which the garden needs sadly." The Marchesa graciously complied with her old friend's request, and sent the gardener to Cricoli with the following note: "Dearest and Magnificent Friend,—My natural wish to oblige you renders me prompt to satisfy your prayer for a visit from my gardener. I send him to you to-day, only begging that, as soon as he has done what is necessary to your trees, you will send him back at once, because my place at Porto is in great need of him just now. Let me know if I can do anything else to help you." April 4, 1537.

At the end of six days the gardener returned to Porto, bearing with him the following note from Trissino: "Most Illustrious and Excellent Lady,—The coming of Your Excellency's gardener has proved of the greatest value to me, especially as the weather has been very rainy of late. His advice has been of great use to my garden, which has been

put into thorough order by the man whom he brought here. For this I render you infinite thanks, because the greater the need, the more grateful and agreeable to me his visit has been. I know not what to give or offer you in return for your kindness in sending him so promptly; but since myself and all that I possess have long been placed at Your Excellency's service, I can only repeat that I hold myself ever at your disposal. I send back the gardener forthwith, so that your garden of Porto may no longer be put to inconvenience."¹

¹ B. Morsolin, *G. G. Trissino*.

CHAPTER XLIII

1537—1539

Visit of Leonora, Duchess of Urbino to Mantua—Titian's portraits of the Duke and Duchess—Death of Francesco Maria—Of Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan—Of Luigi Rodomonte and Antonia del Balzo—Visit of Pietro Bembo—The collections of the Grotta—Paintings and library of Isabella d'Este—Vittoria Colonna—Last visit of Isabella d'Este to Ferrara—Her love for her grandchildren—Duke Ercole lends her his palace at Venice—Her last illness and death—Her tomb in S. Francesco destroyed by the French—Death of Duke Federico—The Mantuan collections sold and the Castello sacked—Character of Isabella d'Este.

IN May, 1537, Leonora, Duchess of Urbino arrived unexpectedly at Mantua, to the great satisfaction of Isabella, who wrote on the 30th to tell her son, Ferrante, that he alone of all her children was absent from this family meeting. "The news which I have to give you of myself to-day is that for the present I am quite well, and all the happier because I have the unexpected delight of enjoying the presence not only of Monsignore Reverendissimo (her son, Cardinal Ercole), but of our dear Duchess of Urbino, who arrived here three days ago, and from what she says herself, as well as from her appearance, seems to be in the best of health."

Leonora came from Venice, where her husband had just been appointed Captain-General of the combined armies of the Emperor, the Pope, the Signoria, and was to lead the forces of the League against the

Turks. Here the Duke and Duchess both sat to Titian for the noble portraits which may be seen to-day in the Uffizi, and which Pietro Aretino celebrated in two sonnets addressed to Vittoria Colonna. Both paintings are masterpieces of their kind, and the olive tones of Francesco Maria's face, his martial air and gleaming armour form a fine contrast to his wife's refined grace and rich brocades. Here at least there is no attempt to hide the ravages which time and trouble had wrought on Leonora's once lovely face. The charms and graces of youth are gone, and the Duchess, we are reminded, is already a grandmother and a matron of seven-and-forty years. Within a year she was a widow, for on the 22nd of October, 1538, Francesco Maria died very suddenly at Pesaro.

Death, which had already carried off most of Isabella's contemporaries, was now busy with the younger generation. On All Souls' Day, 1535, only a year and a half after his marriage, her nephew Francesco, Duke of Milan, died and the grave closed over the last prince of the great house of Sforza. Nearer home, among the Gonzaga princes, there had of late been many deaths. The venerable Antonia del Balzo had already lost two of her sons, the brave Federico da Bozzolo and Pirro, who, with his wife, Camilla Bentivoglio, had long held a brilliant court at Gazzuolo. A sadder and more unexpected blow was the death of the gallant Luigi Rodomonte, who died at Vicovaro in December, 1532, of a wound received in fighting against the Orsini, leaving one child of a year old. This little boy, the sole issue of his father's romantic marriage, bore his grandfather's name of Vespasiano,

and afterwards became famous as the ruler of Sabioneta, where the splendour of his court rivalled that of Mantua, and won for this little city the title of the new Athens. The loss of her beloved grandson in the flower of his age was a grievous blow to Luigi's aged grandmother. She never rallied from the shock, but lingered on till the summer of 1538, when she passed away at the great age of ninety-seven, deeply lamented by the subjects over whom she had reigned so long, and widely honoured as the mother of a long line of heroic sons and beautiful daughters.

The Duchess of Urbino left Mantua in June, 1537, and never saw her mother again. Soon after her departure, Isabella received a visit from an old friend, whom she had not seen for many years. This was none other than Pietro Bembo, the last survivor of the old Urbino group. The distinguished humanist, who now rarely left the sweet solitude of his country home, and preferred watching the swallows circling in the blue air and the tender green of the climbing vines to all the pomp of the Imperial Court, came to Mantua once more that summer. "The Magnifico Bembo has arrived here," wrote the Castellan, Gian Giacomo Calandra, "to pay his respects to the Duke, and visit Madama Illustrissima, and to see all their Excellencies' fine places."¹

After his return to Padua, Bembo wrote to tell the Duchess of Urbino how much he had missed her at Mantua, where he spent five or six days very happily with the Marchesa, seeing all the wonderful new halls and paintings of the ducal palaces. There was much to excite his admiration, both in the Castello itself and in the Duke's new

¹ V. Cian in *Giorn. Stor.*, 1887.

Palazzo del Tè, with all Messer Giulio's frescoes and decorations. There was the Palazzina, where the young Duchess lived, and the superb Sala di Troja, which Messer Giulio had just completed in the new wing of the Corte Vecchia, and for which Titian was painting his great series of the Twelve Cæsars. There were the Marchesa's own rooms, the new apartment of the Paradiso with its charming decorations, and the lovely view over the lakes and the green slopes of Virgil's home. And there was the fair Cortile of the Grotta, with its slender marble columns and pavement of majolica tiles, each with a separate device and meaning, and the adjoining Studio with its priceless treasures of painting and sculpture. Many were the new pictures and marbles which the Marchesa had to show her old friend, many the precious objects with which she had enriched her collection since the first visit which Bembo had paid to Mantua thirty years before. Here, in marked contrast to the noble severity of Mantegna's *grisailles* and the classical beauty of his Parnassus, were the graceful allegories of Correggio, with their softly-rounded forms and dainty grace, the last word which the Renaissance had to say before the fatal age of decadence set in. Here were the brightly-coloured dreams of Lorenzo Costa, the old Court-painter, who had only ended his long life two years before, and the Holy Family by his friend, Gian Bellini, and those quaint fancies in which the Ferrara master, Dosso Dossi, seems to have caught the very breath of old romance. Here above all were Titian's magnificent creations, those unrivalled portraits, and splendid array of Holy Families and Saints, painted in the same

glowing colours, with the same exquisite landscapes, bounded by the far blue peaks of Cadore. Here, side by side with Mantegna's beloved Faustina, and the Greek marbles which Fra Sabba had collected on his distant cruises among the isles of the Ionian seas, were the antiques which Isabella herself had rescued from the wreck of Rome, and the sleeping Cupid which had come to take its place by that other famous *putto* which Michelangelo's hands had fashioned, and Cæsar Borgia had sent to Mantua. Here, too, among the thousands of gold and silver medals, of Greek and Roman coins, and engraved gems which were arranged in cases and cabinets along the walls of the Grotta, Bembo saw Cristoforo Romano's medal of Isabella herself, as he remembered the Marchesa in the flower of youth and beauty. This admirable work is still preserved in the Imperial Gallery at Vienna, with the same rich setting of enamel and precious gems that is described in the Inventory of 1542, where it is mentioned among the goods contained "in the middle cabinet in the Grotta of Madama, in the Corte Vecchia," as follows: "A gold medal with Her Highness's effigy when she was young, bearing the word Isabella in letters of diamonds, with rosettes of red enamel, and a border of blue and white enamelled rosettes, and on the reverse a figure of Victory in relief."¹

Somewhere too, among the pictures hung on the walls of the Castello, Bembo found his own portrait set in a small frame of carved walnut, side by side with those of his old master, Pope Leo X., and the German reformers, Martin Luther and Erasmus of

¹ V. Cian in *Giorn. Stor.*, 1887. See vol. i. p. 170.



[Photo, Fromi, Mantua.

PARADISO. CASTELLO DI MANTOVA.

[To face p. 378, col. ii.

Rotterdam.¹ This curiously assorted group of portraits is mentioned in an Inventory of Duke Federico's pictures found at Casale after his death, and probably belonged to his mother, who had been intimate with at least two of the group, and had heard much of Luther and Erasmus from her friend Chiericati.

But paintings and sculpture were not the only treasures which Isabella's Grotta contained. There was the alabaster organ which Castiglione had sent from Rome with so much toil and trouble. There were Lorenzo da Pavia's viols and lutes of inlaid ivory and ebony, and her sister Beatrice's sweet-toned organ, and Caradosso's wonderful ebony inkstand, adorned with silver statuettes and reliefs. There were antique bronzes, figures of alabaster and jasper, cabinets of porphyry and lapis-lazuli, Murano glass of delicate tints and rare workmanship, precious vases, such as these which Isabella asked Leonardo to choose from Lorenzo dei Medici's collection, and crystal mirrors set in rubies and diamonds and pearls, one of which was valued at the enormous sum of 100,000 ducats.²

Of still greater interest in the Venetian scholar's eyes were the rare books and manuscripts in the Marchesa's library of the Grotta. Her own love for these had never changed, and only a year before, she had succeeded in obtaining a copy of the history of Josephus in the original from Venice. How eagerly Bembo's eyes must have scanned the shelves where his own *Asolani* stood among the presentation copies of works by living poets, the *Orlundos* of Ariosto and

¹ V. Cian, *op. cit.*

² D'Arco, *Arte e Artefici*, vol. ii. 161.

Boiardo, the sonnets and *canzoni* of Pistoja and Niccolo da Correggio! With what keen delight he must have turned over the pages of illuminated manuscripts of Petrarch and Boccaccio, and examined these curious Books of Fortune and Dreams on which the cultured ladies of those days set so much store! He must have looked with even greater reverence on the rare copy of *Eustathius* which Pope Clement VII. sent to borrow in 1525, because the Greek scholar Lascaris had told Alberto Pio that Isabella's manuscript was the most correct version in existence.¹ The Revelations of St. Bridget and Prayers of St. Catherine were probably less to the scholar's taste, but we wonder if he paused to glance at Savonarola's Sermons, or at the Commentary on the Fifty-first Psalm which the great Dominican had written in prison.² More familiar to Bembo's eyes were the Aldine classics, which had been mostly produced under his own direction, and of which the Marchesa we know possessed a complete set. Here too was her choice collection of French and Spanish romances, and of Latin translations from Greek authors. Among these Bembo found the famous *Icones* of Philostratus which had supplied the greatest Venetian painters with subjects for some of their finest works, and which Isabella lent to her brother Alfonso, when Titian was painting his Bacchanals in the Castello of Ferrara. In the same hall Bembo saw the terrestrial and celestial globes which had been made after the pattern of those in the Vatican library, and the *Mappamondo* which contained the latest discoveries of Columbus and

¹ *Bibliofilo*, i. 26.

² *Ibid.*, ix. 71-86.

Vasco da Gama, as well as Pigafetti's still more recent account of Magellan's expedition. Here too he found the collection of poems on the death of Isabella's pet dog Aura, to which so many of his Roman friends had contributed sonnets and epigrams, and the latest volumes of Pasquino's witticisms in prose and verse, which the Marchesa had received from Rome. So wide and varied were the contents of this library which Isabella had collected during the last fifty years, and which it was her delight to study with scholars as learned as Bembo. How they must have talked—this accomplished lady who had acquired the reputation of speaking Latin better than any other woman of her day, and the old humanist whom she loved “as dearly as a brother.” What memories of the past they must have summoned up as they sat together among their favourite books and pictures in the cool halls of the Grotta and the Paradiso, or spent the long summer evenings in the green shades of beautiful Porto! How many familiar names must have been recalled—how many vanished faces must have risen before their eyes, as they looked back on the old days, and the great age which was fast passing away! They may have met once more in the autumn of the following year at Venice, but if Bembo never saw Isabella d'Este again, the memory of this last visit to Mantua made a deep impression on his mind, and in a letter which he wrote soon afterwards to her son, Cardinal Ercole, he pronounced the illustrious Marchesa to be at once the wisest and most fortunate of women.¹

Another old friend of Bembo spent that summer

¹ V. Cian, *op. cit.*

at Ferrara, and was urgently pressed by the Marchesa and her sons to visit Mantua. This was Vittoria Colonna, who came to visit Duchess Renée, and stood sponsor in June to her new-born daughter, the Leonora of Tasso's love.¹ One great object of the Marchesa di Pescara's journey was to introduce the great preacher Fra Bernardino Ochino to her friends at Ferrara, and to obtain Duke Ercole's protection for his new Order of Reformed Friars. In Lent, 1535, Agostino Gonzaga had sent Isabella a long letter from Rome, describing the enthusiasm which the Friar's sermons were exciting in Rome. "He is a man of most holy life himself, and his sermons are all devoted to the exposition of the Gospels. His whole object is to teach men how to walk in the steps of Christ, and he has the most admirable fervour, as well as a most perfect voice. He is not afraid of saying what is good for his hearers, and aims his rebukes chiefly at those in high station, so that all Rome flocks to hear him. The *Reverendissimo* Medici is never absent from his sermons, and most of the Sacred College are to be seen here. My *Reverendissimo* (Ercole Gonzaga) has been here twice, and was beyond measure delighted with the sermons which he heard, so I think he will continue to attend the course." In the same letter Agostino tells Isabella "that the Marchesa di Pescara is always present at these sermons, and is living in seclusion with the Sisters of S. Silvestro, receiving no visits, and wearing the humblest of habits, and is so devoted to religious exercises that it is expected she will soon take the veil."² Vittoria Colonna wrote herself to Ercole

¹ Frizzi, *Storia di Ferrara*, iv. p. 321.

² Luzio, *Rivista Mantovana*, i. 26.

Gonzaga from Ferrara, asking him to give his sanction to the new Order founded by Fra Bernardino, in whose teaching she saw "a return to the true and holy life of St. Francis." On the 18th of June the young Cardinal answered her letter, begging her to come to Mantua, and assuring her that she would find far more spiritual and temporal delights in this city than at Ferrara. There is a hospital Della Misericordia, which would, he is certain, abundantly satisfy her charitable zeal, and the Duke and all his family would rejoice to welcome her. Besides which, he continues, "this city is more Imperial in its sympathies than the Emperor itself, and more devoted to the Marchese del Vasto than any other in Lombardy, all of which seems to claim the honour of your presence. And I can promise you the company of my two sisters, who are nuns, in whose society you will find as much consolation as you would have found in the company of the Holy Women who stood at the foot of the Cross on Calvary." In a postscript, the writer adds "that in his joy at the thought of seeing her, and his longing to enjoy her sweet conversation, he sees that he has forgotten to answer her question about Fra Bernardino."¹

Another inducement which Ercole held out to the Marchesa di Pescara, was the prospect of the Council which Pope Paul III. had summoned to meet in that city. But the Duke afterwards raised objections, and the idea was eventually abandoned. Vittoria, on her part, intended to visit Venice, and had dreams of a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, or to the shrine of St. Mary Magdalene in Provence, but in the end she remained with her beloved Duchess

¹ G. Campori, *Atti e Memorie*, iii. pt. ii. p. 2.

at Ferrara. That Lent, Fra Bernardino Ochino preached a course of sermons in the Duomo, and within the last few months Renée had received both Clement Marot and Calvin at her court, but now Duke Ercole, in his anxiety to distract his wife's thoughts from these subjects, gave a series of fêtes and tournaments in honour of his illustrious guests. Another very different lady, Tullia, the illegitimate daughter of the Cardinal of Aragon, was also at Ferrara that summer, and charmed all the Este princes as she had charmed the Cardinals in Rome and the ambassadors of the Imperial Court at Bologna. Ippolito dei Medici wrote sonnets in her praise, and all the wits and scholars of the day were at her feet. Stabellino's letters to Isabella are full of Tullia's charms. "Your Excellency," he wrote in June, 1537, "will have heard that a noble Roman lady, called Signora Tullia, is spending some months here. She is very gentle, discreet and clever, and endowed with the rarest gifts of body and mind. She sings all manner of songs, reads music at sight, and her conversation is altogether unique, while her manners are so charming, that there is neither a man nor a woman here who can hold a candle to her, not even the Most Illustrious Marchesa di Pescara. This lady knows everything, and is ready to talk with others on any subject they may choose. Her house is full of the most learned men, and the doors are open to all, but she is abundantly supplied with money and jewels, and has in fact everything that she requires."¹

Vittoria Colonna was still at Ferrara when, after Christmas, Isabella paid her usual visit to Ercole's court, and attended the Carnival fêtes. On the 23rd

¹ Luzio, *Rivista Mantovana*, i. 33.

of February, 1538, she took leave of her hosts, and the Cardinal of Ravenna, Benedetto Accolti, wrote the following letter to Ercole Gonzaga:—

“This morning, the Signora Marchesa di Pescara started for Bologna, to the incredible grief of His Excellency the Duke, of myself, and of the whole city. We have indeed been divinely entertained by her presence, and can only comfort ourselves with the promises which she has made to return before long. Last night we enjoyed a rare treat. The Duke and I, as well as the Marchesa, supped with your most Illustrious Mother, and after supper the Marchesa read us five sonnets of her composition, which were so beautiful that I do not think an angel from heaven could have written anything more perfect. After these recitations, which gave us all infinite pleasure, the ladies of Madama, your mother, appeared, and with them Signora Anna, who played some pieces on the *gravicembalo* excellently. Then Morgantino came in with Delia, and jumped and danced together, and did great things with their little persons. Signora Anna then joined them, and danced several dances *alla gagliarda*, which gave the Marchesa di Pescara, and the Duke, and every one, the greatest pleasure. We were all of us convinced, that if the Goddess Nature herself had danced before us, she could not have danced in more perfect time, and with more exquisite grace.”¹

Signora Anna was the Duke's six-year-old daughter, the bright and intelligent little girl who resembled her great aunt so strongly, and had evidently inherited the Marchesa's musical tastes. All Duchess Renée's children were trained to act and dance before the

¹ G. Campori, *Atti e Memorie*, iii. pt. ii. p. 12.

illustrious guests who visited their father's court. When, a few years later, Pope Paul III. came to Ferrara, they acted a Latin comedy, the *Adelphi* of Terence, for the amusement of His Holiness, Anna taking the lover's part on this occasion, and her youngest brother Luigi, a child of four, appearing in the part of a slave.¹

Soon after this festive evening, which had given her guests so much pleasure, Isabella returned to Mantua and spent the summer quietly at home. We catch one pleasant glimpse of her in a letter addressed to Duke Federico, in which she dwells with all a grandmother's delight on the charms and cleverness of his children.

"I have just returned," she wrote, "from my villa at Belfiore, where I spent some days, with the greatest benefit to my health. I may say, indeed, that having gone there seriously indisposed, I have returned by the grace of God in good health. Yesterday I went to the Castello, and visited the Illustrious Duchess, your wife, and my daughter, whom I found together with the Marchese and the other princes in the best of health. All I saw there gave me the greatest pleasure and amusement. The Marchese, who is growing up beautiful as a flower, recited thirty or forty lines from Virgil, in the presence of his mother the Duchess, with a grace and clearness which were simply amazing! I saw Signor Guglielmo, with his fat baby-face looking as innocent and as merry as possible, and both he and his sweet sister Donna Isabella are in my eyes a picture of all the joys the world can give."² Two years later, the

¹ Frizzi, *op. cit.*

² Luzio e Renier, *Giorn. Stor.*, 1899, p. 36.

little Marchese, Francesco, who could repeat Virgil at the age of five, succeeded his father as Duke of Mantua. In 1549 he married the Archduchess Catherine of Austria, a niece of Charles V., but died a few months afterwards, from a fever brought on by falling into the lake when he was shooting wild-fowl from a boat.”¹ Isabella, who was born in April, 1537, became the wife of Francesco d’Avalos, while her brother Guglielmo, then an infant of a few months, grew up to manhood, and reigned long and gloriously over the realm of the Gonzagas.

Already Isabella d’Este watched her eldest son’s failing health with anxiety, and in a letter to her old friend Trissino, who had begged her intercession on behalf of two gentlemen of Verona, she speaks of the Duke as seriously indisposed and unable to attend to business. A month later she persuaded him to accompany her to Venice for change of air, and gladly accepted Ercole d’Este’s offer of his palace on the Grand Canal, which he placed at her disposal during the next two months. This fine old house, where Beatrice d’Este once spent a joyous May-time, had been thoroughly restored and sumptuously decorated for the reception of Duchess Renée when she went to Venice in 1534, and Isabella was delighted with the prospect of occupying this magnificent *palazzo*. “We are coming to Venice,” she wrote to Benedetto Agnello on the 23rd of September, “to spend all October there for our amusement, and our nephew the Illustrious Duke of Ferrara has kindly placed his house at our disposal until November.”²

The Marchesa, indeed, was so happy at Venice,

¹ Litta, *Famiglie*, iii. tav. 5.

² V. Cian, *op. cit.*

and was so warmly welcomed and honourably entertained by her friends in this city, that she prolonged her stay there until the end of November. But the weather broke up before she left, and the journey back to Mantua proved too much for her failing strength. On the 29th, she wrote to her widowed daughter Leonora: "My return from Venice took place in very rough weather, and has caused some disturbance in my system, so that until now I have not ventured to leave my room, and am still in some pain." That Advent, Vittoria Colonna's friend, Fra Bernardino Ochino, preached a course of stirring sermons at Mantua, but Isabella was unable to be present. These gastric pains, which had been the cause of her mother's death, continued to trouble the Marchesa throughout the winter, and in January she found herself still too unwell to pay her yearly visit to Ferrara. But she longed for news of her dear ones in the old home, and listened eagerly to the letters which told her of the Duke and Duchess and their little daughter Anna. On the 18th of January, Stabellino wrote to ask after her health, and told her of the latest Carnival fêtes: "Here we are enjoying tournaments and masquerades and banquets. Last night the Cardinal of Ravenna entertained the Duke and most of the Court at the Schifanoia Palace. A very amusing farce by Strascino was performed, after which there was dancing up till ten o'clock."¹

So Isabella drew slowly to her end, retaining full possession of all her faculties, and hearing with delight of pleasures which she could no longer share. She followed the parting injunctions of her old favourite,

¹ Fontana, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

Matteo Bandello, the Dominican story-teller, and lived joyously to the last. Four years before, she had made her last will, in which not only her children and ladies-in-waiting, but all her servants and dependants were thoughtfully remembered. Even her pet dwarfs, Morgantino and Delia, were affectionately commended to the care of the Duke and Duchess, and provided with a yearly allowance of fifty ducats if they would not or could not remain in her son's service. Now she took a tender farewell of the children she had loved so well, and on the night of the 13th of February her great soul passed away.

"On the 13th of February, 1539," writes the chronicler of the Franciscan convent, "there died in Mantua, Madama Isabella d'Este, or rather, it should be said, her soul took flight to its eternal rest. She had always been devout and humble in her lifetime, and on her deathbed she begged that she might be buried privately, and without any pomp, in the grave of her husband in Santa Paola. This was done, with the tears and lamentations of all the people."¹

The great Marchesa was buried by her husband's side in the Cappella dei Signori, in the Church of S. Francesco, sometimes called Santa Paola, from the neighbouring convent founded by the Marchesa Paola, where Isabella's own daughter had taken the veil. Duke Federico ordered a noble tomb to be raised to his mother's memory in the sepulchral chapel of the Gonzaga princes. Before it was completed, the Duke himself died, at his favourite villa of Marmirolo, on the 28th of June, 1540, leaving his little son Francesco to the guardianship of his

¹ Donesmondi, *Storia Ecclesiastica di Mantova*.

brother, Cardinal Ercole, and his wife Margherita. He was buried, according to his last wishes, by his mother's side, in S. Francesco. But when, in 1797, the French took Mantua after a long siege, the church, which contained more than 300 monuments of the Gonzagas and other noble families, was pillaged. Then the frescoes and paintings which adorned its walls were ruined, the tombs were broken in pieces, and the ashes which they contained were scattered to the winds. To-day this once stately shrine, so rich in historic memories and treasures of art, has been converted into a barrack school, and no trace of Isabella d'Este's last resting-place can now be seen.

The Castello suffered terribly at the hands of the German soldiers who were sent against Duke Carlo I. by the Emperor Ferdinand II. in 1630, and who sacked Mantua during three whole days. A short time before, Vincenzo II. had sold the bulk of his splendid gallery to our King Charles I., while the paintings by Mantegna, Perugino, and Costa, which adorned Isabella's Grotta, were bought soon after the siege by Cardinal Richelieu. The beautiful apartments which Isabella planned and adorned with so much taste were stripped of their decorations, and the priceless works of art which they contained were all scattered abroad. The small number which escaped destruction passed into foreign galleries, and a few scanty fragments of painting and carving, with here and there a device or inscription bearing her name, are the only traces of Isabella's presence that now remain in Mantua.

Fortunately, the greater part of her correspondence has survived the general wreck, and forms a record of more than common value. These pre-

cious manuscripts of the Archivio Gonzaga give us a faithful picture of a period that must be for ever memorable in the history of the human race. And they reveal, with a fulness that leaves nothing to be desired, the character of a woman who was in a remarkable degree typical of the age in which she lived. Both in her faults and in her virtues, in her noble aims and generous ambitions, in the doubtful methods by which she strove to attain her ends, and in her easy toleration of vice and falsehood, Isabella d'Este was the child of her times. She did not share the mystical tendencies of her kinswomen, Vittoria Colonna and Renée de France; she belonged rather to the earlier generation, which took the facts of life more simply, and accepted the faith of the Church without questioning, if without enthusiasm. But a strong sense of duty, a passionate devotion to home and kindred governed her actions, and kept her in the right way. Her nature was singularly complete and well-balanced, and it may be said with truth that she saw life steadily, and saw it whole. In her radiant vitality and keen enjoyment of living, in her worship of beauty and wide culture, in her serene temper and stainless purity, this great-souled lady remains for us the noblest and most perfect type of the Italian women of the Renaissance.

POSTSCRIPT.—Whilst these pages were going to press the missing portrait of Federico Gonzaga, painted by Francia in July 1510, when he was a boy of ten,¹ has most unexpectedly come to light, and was exhibited at the Burlington Fine Arts Club in 1903. This picture, which Mr. Herbert Cook was the first to identify (see *Athenæum*, February 7, 1903), is the property of

¹ As described in vol. i. p. 380.

Mr. A. W. Leatham, whose father purchased it from the Napoleon Collection. It is in remarkably good preservation, and there can be no doubt that it is the work of Francia. Isabella's son is represented holding a dagger in his hand, and wearing a black doublet over a white frilled chemisette, and a black cap set jauntily on one side of his head, with a red riband fastened with the same carved gold medallion—perhaps Caradosso's work—which he wore when Raphael painted his portrait two years later in Rome. The brown eyes and bright, intelligent face bear a marked likeness to his mother, and the long fair hair has evidently been darkened, as was done, we know, at the Marchesa's request, and still shows traces of the original blond hue underneath. The graceful landscape background is in Francia's usual style; the lights in the foliage are heightened with gold, and the want of elaboration in the details bears witness to the amazing rapidity with which the portrait was painted. We are reminded of Isabella's words to Casio: "It could not be better or more like him than it is, and I marvel that in so short a time the master could do so excellent a thing, but it is clear that he wished to show all the perfections of his art." The long-lost portrait, we know, left Mantua a year and a half later, and probably remained at Ferrara until it was brought to France among Napoleon's spoils. By a strange coincidence it has been recovered, at the end of four hundred years, only a few months after Titian's portrait of Isabella herself has once more been brought to light.

February 7, 1908.

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